APRIL

70

Polyhedron™

NEWSZINE

RPGA® NETWORK

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Phil Anderson and Nick Klapper cheerfully execute a napoleonic flanking maneuver.

TSR's Zeb Cook relates the tactical situation to two tabletop generals.

Member Joel Westphal looked decidedly dragonish for the *Golden Oldies* scenario.

A Good Time Was Had By All
At the

WINTER · Fantasy

'92 Convention,

January 3-5

Member Terry Wright looks pensive as member Jeffrey Carey (behind the DM screen) considers a plot twist.

The Russians are coming! Dale Roethig prepares to advance his troops.

Members Marshall Simpson (left) and Ken Ritchart examine the spoils of victory Sunday morning.

About the Cover

Artist Clyde Caldwell illustrates a beautiful warrior—who has a very deadly sword.

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Polyhedron™ NEWSZINE

Volume 12, Number 4
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Notes From HQ

Singing Walruses And Other Winter Fantasies

Although this is the April issue of the Newszine, it is still January for us. We wrapped up Winter Fantasy a few weeks ago. The convention was a success.

This was the fourth year the Network sponsored Winter Fantasy; it was our best yet.

Our highlight was the AD&D® Game Benefit Event—"Big," written by Steve and Kris Hardinger. That tournament, coupled with proceeds from our convention-long interactive event, donations from a miniatures game, and proceeds from a Ray VanTilburg T-shirt auction, raised $1,100 for the Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Walworth County. Representatives of the organization, including a Big Brother, Big Sister, and a Little Brother, were on hand to accept the check. It was the largest amount ever raised from a benefit at Winter Fantasy, and Network HQ is very thankful to all the people who contributed.

Another highlight was our first two-round Living City Tournament, "Eye Of The Leviathan." It was written by Randall Lemon and Ed Peterson, who have coordinated Living City tournaments at GEN CON® Game Fair practically since the tournaments' inception. Randall and Ed should write more L.C. events, as the players loved "Eye," and other conventions already are requesting the tournament.

Some of the DMs, however, were not tickled with the scenario. Round Two involved an encounter with a singing walrus. The walrus didn't talk. He sang. Everything. Randall and Ed complicated matters by detailing singing passages to show tunes from *Brigadoon, Fiddler On The Roof,* and others.

To make matters worse, or verse, depending on your situation, the walrus expected the PCs to sing back. Most groups complied, and one party went so far as to communicate in Rap.

Two non-musical Living City adventures have been slated for GEN CON® Game Fair. Don't miss them!

Winter Fantasy hosted the Network's first interactive event, called the "Terrors of Terre Haute." Mike Selinker, Brett Bakke, and other stalwart members coordinated. Any Winter Fantasy attendee was welcome to a character—who during the course of the convention was charged with finding out the secret of the glowing blue Lake Terre Haute. The city was saved shortly before the awards ceremony on Sunday. Members Advisory Committee member Carl Buehler was named the best investigator in the matter, and Noah Turnullo of New York was commended for the best role playing (his rendition of an Arnold Schwarzenegger-type was very entertaining).

Next Winter Fantasy will be bigger and better. We're moving to MECCA. Okay, not *all* of MECCA. We have no intention of getting as big as GEN CON® Game Fair. We're going to fill at least one ballroom. The Hyatt Regency and Hotel Wisconsin are giving us special room rates. It's set for January 8-10, 1993. Put it on your calendars now.

Another thing to note about this past Winter Fantasy was the flu bug...and the cold bug...and all the other plagues. Some people wisely stayed home; they were too sick to fly or drive. Others, however, forged ahead to the convention—and proceeded to expose the healthy con-goers. A cacophony of sneezes, gasps, and sniffles rose above the singing walruses.

Ah well, the convention was indeed memorable. Check out our photo page for more high points.

The Decathlon Rolls On

The Network presented the victor's spoils, in the form of trophies, for the 1991 Decathlon at Winter Fantasy's awards ceremony. Top honors once again went to the ARC Fellowship of Asheville, NC. ARC really poured on the heat during the final quarter of 1991 to come from behind. The PM Players of Chicago lead through most of the year, but couldn't hold off ARC and had to settle for second place. The Valiant 13th Regiment of Randolph, MA, narrowly edged out the Midwest Masters of Lincoln, NE, to claim the third place trophy. HQ extends its congratulations to all clubs that participated. We hope to see even more excitement in 1992.

Help Us Hold The Line

This is a special note to all our Canadian and International members. We are trying to hold the line on the price of memberships, but we need your help. The Network's U.S. bank insists on charging $5 for every Canadian or International check that comes in. Because of that PLEASE do not send checks. Send Money Orders in U.S. funds or use your MasterCard or VISA when you renew your memberships—that way we won't have to increase the cost of memberships. We're not assessed any bank fees for Money Orders or credit cards.

Happy Birthday Fluffy

Fluffy, that intrepid canine who exercises more doggy-derring-do than any other RPGA Network personality, is 10 years old this August.

For those of you who have not played in a Fluffy Quest event, here's a brief rundown: Fluffy is an intelligent fictional character who has been populating author Rick Reid's adventures for a decade. Network members have rescued Fluffy from a multitude of menaces in escapades such as: Son of Fluffy, A Fluffy Wonderland, Curse of Fluffystein, and more. Fluffy has also spun off into other genres: "Fluffy-San" for the AD&D game Oriental Adventures, "Fluffynoia" for West End's Paranoia game, and "Bond, Fluffy Bond," for Victory Game's James Bond system.

Network HQ is helping Fluffy celebrate through a contest.

We think it would be especially nice if Fluffy received birthday cards. That's the contest. Send a birthday card or greeting to Fluffy, c/o Network HQ. Prizes will be awarded for the best entries. Don't go off and buy a card at a store. Be creative! We intend to display the cards near Network HQ at the Game Fair. So do your best for Fluffy. **Deadline: June 30, 1992.**

Mail entries to:
Happy Birthday Fluffy
c/o RPGA Network
P.O. Box 515
Lake Geneva, WI, 53147
USA

Just wait til next issue when we spring a Fluffy Trivia Contest on you.

Take Care,

Jean ❑

Letters

Review Request

I thought I would write just to say that the Newszine has a very refreshing format when compared with other magazines. Firstly, it is informal, but not too light weight, thus retaining sensibility. Also, the idea of RPGA™ Network members sending articles encourages people to write, and it helps them improve their skills. There is also a good mixture of "pure" fantasy material like *The New Rogues Gallery* and pieces that would appear in any magazine, whatever its specialization, like *Wolff and Byrd.*

I also have a suggestion for a new column. Members write paragraph-long reviews of appropriate products; game systems, adventures, and novels. These are then compiled into a page-long column with the reviews grouped under the appropriate headings. With this column, members can inform others of their luck or misfortune—and, as each piece is short and easy to write, more people will be encouraged to write in. It also would be interesting to see people's opinions on products. This should help people to choose what to buy without being swayed by the biased views of the product manufacturers. What do you think, fellow members and the Newszine editorial staff? Would it work?

Lawrence Hurley
Herefordshire, England

Thanks for the idea, Lawrence. It might work. The Newszine has been emphasizing previews rather than reviews. For example, we previewed bits and pieces of the new GAMMA WORLD® game. And we previewed other games such as the BOOT HILL® game and West End Games' Ghost Busters International. We've done previews because other magazines do reviews—and, frankly, we wanted to offer something different. However, a members' opinion column on games is different, too. Well, readers, would you like to see such a column—and would you be willing to contribute to it? Do you want reviews? It's up to you. If we get enough responses, we'll give it a try.

Damaged Newszines

I have been a long-time subscriber of your Newszine, and I even acquired all of your back issues. I thoroughly enjoy all the material in the Newszine, and I have never had a problem with subscriptions, lost issues, or damaged goods. But in the past an occasional issue has turned up slightly the worse for wear, due to its travels. And the issue that I received today is by far the worst one to date.

I would be more than willing to pay an extra 25 cents to 50 cents an issue to insure a safer arrival. Recently I received an issue of DRAGON® Magazine that was in similar condition, but on the whole their plastic covers do help. I tried to cast aspersions on the Post Office, but like any other deity, they made their saving throw without even flinching.

Please let me know if there is any way that I could try to arrange a better Armor Class rating for my issues!

Paul P. Murphy
Palm Beach, Florida

Paul, occasionally the staff's issues arrive somewhat mangled, and we are currently exploring different mailing options. We'll keep you posted. In the meantime, if you receive issues that are in bad shape, please contact us. We'll replace Newszines as long as we have copies available. (Our supplies usually run out in less than a month.)

Sword Fancier

In issue #65 on the cover—good art, Fred—what kind of sword is that? If you know, could you give me the statistics for the AD&D® game?

You might want to know that I'm only 11 years old and that I have players who are 9-years-old and 11-years-old. So I guess you're capturing the young readers, too! And in Canada!

Marc Laliberte
Quebec, Canada

We're glad to know the POLYHEDRON® Newszine appeals to people of all ages. We were rather fond of Fred Field's cover art on that issue, too. The expertly-illustrated sword is a scimitar. You can find the basic statistics for this weapon the Players Handbook, *page 69. However, this one is pretty large and has a hilt that might accommodate two hands. Such a weapon should cost about 22 gp, and probably weighs about 10 pounds; it's Size M and Type S. When used two-handed, it might have the following stats: Speed Factor 7; Damage S-M 2d4/L 2d6.*

Hope you like this issue's cover. And for those members who read even the replies to letters, here's a contest just for you: What kind of magic sword is our cover's beauteous warrior wielding? Give us the statistics. No entry should exceed a half-page. Deadline: June 1, 1992. The winner will receive a nifty prize.

❑

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The Everwinking Eye

Elminster's Eversmoking Pipe Revealed

by Ed Greenwood

"There is something in a man that makes him want to be a dragon. Wizards can manage the wings, scales, tail and all—but the rest of us have to be content with lighting a pipe and puffing smoke about. Silly? Yes, I suppose—but, then, that word covers a lot of what men do, doesn't it?"

Vangerdahast,
Letters To Novice Court Wizards
Year of the Gulagoar

Several readers have asked for details of the pipe our good sage smokes when he visits me. I suspect certain among them hoped (correctly, as it turns out) it would prove to be some sort of magical item, perhaps even a weapon. I took the liberty of asking Elminster about it on the occasion of his last visit. I recall that during the memorable winter when he first visited me he used a variety of pipes—long clay models being favored—but later settled on a single distinctive specimen. This latter pipe is a curving, smooth pipe fashioned of some dark, lustrous wood. It is indeed special, and is described hereafter. DMs who have Elminster put in a direct appearance in play are advised that authenticity demands they add the details of *Elminster's eversmoking pipe* to the descriptions of Elminster given in issue 110 of DRAGON® Magazine and in the FR7 *Hall of Heroes* sourcebook.

So as not to forget anything (Elminster does not lend himself to ready organization), I've described this pipe in the strict rules format first used in the D&D® game accessory book AC11 *The Book of Wondrous Inventions.*

Definition: A pipe for the smoking of tobacco, with a secondary use as a weapon.

History: This pipe was developed by the wizard Elminster, and was unique to him until recently, when he made details of its making and construction available to the wizard Sarghun of Silverymoon, who also enjoys a good pipe. Various other mages of the Forgotten Realms have since gleaned details of the pipe from Sarghun.

Description: The invention looks like a large-bowled, curved-stemmed meerschaum pipe. (The sort often depicted by artists portraying the fictional detective Sherlock Holmes. In the Realms, most such pipes actually are carved of felsul root. Note that in the Sherlock Holmes stories the detective's pipes were long, straight-stemmed clay specimens, but the artists usually drew him smoking a meerschaum anyway.)

Elminster's eversmoking pipe does not produce large amounts of smoke. However, the smoke is thick, greenish-gray, and contains occasional tiny, winking sparks. The smoke keeps normal insects at bay, clearing them from a 10-foot radius around the user. This protection is effective even against magically summoned insects.

Construction: 13,000 gp (*Charged version*), 21,000 gp *Permanent version*); 20 days (*Charged*), 28 (*Permanent*); 1,200 XP

In addition to the *enchant an item spell*, the pipe requires the following magics: *pyrotechnics, wall of force,* and *Drawmij's Instant Summons.* Unless the pipe is a charged version, it must also be given *Permanency.*

In D&D® game campaigns, the required spells are *wall of fire, summon object,* and *force field,* plus *permanence* if desired.

A non-permanent *eversmoking pipe* can retain six charges. A single charge keeps the pipe lit for seven hours of continuous use (the pipe can be extinguished and the remaining duration on a charge saved for later use.) The *pipe* can be recharged. To restore a single charge to the pipe a wizard must cast one spell of each type. The crushed and powdered gems required for *Drawmij's instant summons* and *wall of force* spells must be tamped into the bowl.

Statistics: Such a pipe is usually 10 inches long or less, and weighs less than one pound.

Functioning: The pipe's bowl has the usual cavity for tobacco. When the pipe is activated, tobacco is constantly replenished at the bottom of the cavity by magical means; the *summons* teleports tobacco in from a known store (usually a large sack or barrel in the owner's domicile).

Neither type of pipe can stay lit if it runs out of tobacco. If the pipe is a "charged" version, and it runs out of tobacco, it uses up the current charge regardless of the elapsed time of use. Simply restoring the tobacco supply is sufficient to allow the pipe to function again. (Of course, a charged pipe with no charges cannot function, tobacco supply notwithstanding.)

The pipe is smoked normally. To one side of the tobacco cavity is the pipe-stem. On the other, across from the stem, is a tiny cavity containing a flame. Whenever the smoker sucks on the pipe, the flame is drawn into the tobacco, igniting it.

The pipe is activated by the direct touch (flesh to wood) of any being who simultaneously says, "Flame," or any single (usually cryptic) command word chosen during the initial enchantment. In like manner, "Out!" or an equivalent command word (plus simultaneous touch) de-activates the pipe.

When activated, the pipe lights itself, and its bowl is shielded from the elements by a miniature, hemispherical *wall of force.* This allows the user to keep the pipe lit even in rain, snow, *gusts of wind* or gale-force natural winds. The bowl itself is magically protected against overheating and burning during normal use.

Hazards: Several conditions of the pipe-user's surroundings, such as the presence of a natural or magical *dust storm* or *dust devil,* a *pyrotechnics* spell, *cloudkill,* or *stinking cloud,* will cause the pipe to ignite a fiery 3d6 *fireball*-like explosion. The pipe is allowed an item saving throw (it is "Wood, thin," and gets a +3 bonus as a magic item with fire-related powers; in this case it saves vs. *magical fire*). If it fails, it is destroyed, and anyone in contact with it receives a penalty of −3 on his own saving throw against the fiery explosion.

A pipe cannot function under water or in an airless void. When a lit pipe is exposed to these conditions, or subjected to a *quench fire* spell, it automatically is extinguished and the current charge ends.

Attempts to add more than six charges to the pipe cause an explosion

for 2d6 damage and destroys the item. *Eversmoking pipes* never indicate how many charges remain or when their capacity is approaching full, but the being enchanting a pipe knows the pipe's capacity (and, of course, initial charges).

If the pipe is struck or dropped, its flame may momentarily curl out of the bowl, or lit tobacco may spill out of the bowl and ignite nearby flammables.

If the smoker of a charged version of the pipe blows hard through the stem, while murmuring the deactivation word, the pipe will drain one charge (the current one if lit). As it goes out, it produces a single, spinning ball of flame that can inflict 1d4 points of damage. This ball of flame will belch immediately up out of the pipe. It is similar to a *Melf's minute meteor,* and the pipe-smoker can direct it at targets up to 90 feet distant by pointing. No verbal command is required. Anything flammable struck by the ball must save versus *magical fire* or ignite. A permanent pipe can produce this ball of flame once each round.

A wizard of 9th level or higher also can use an *eversmoking pipe* to produce crude images, symbols, or directive arrows from the smoke it emits, and can vary the hue and brightness of the smoke. Such displays can never trigger or substitute for magical symbols or runes, but they can convey messages to all who see them. And they can, with practice, work precisely enough to make the smoke-image resemble a specific being. Such images require two to five rounds to fully form, and last for another two to five rounds.

An *eversmoking pipe* can be commanded to reproduce one of the effects of a *pyrotechnics* spell once every three rounds (each such use drains a charge from a non-permanent pipe). The pipe-smoker launching the *pyrotechnics* is immune to any such effect generated by the pipe.

Any *eversmoking pipe* can be commanded (with a single, secret word) to return to the hand of its owner, regardless of distance, planar separation, or barriers and protections. The pipe will appear one to three rounds after the the command word is spoken. The summoning word can be changed at will by holding the pipe, flesh to wood, and speaking a certain rhyme that includes the new summoning word and cancels all others. If the cancellation is left out of this charm, previous words will still work, and the pipe could end up flicking rapidly around the planes in an endless tug-of-war between rivals.

The rhyme for changing the summoning word is a unique seventh-level *conjuration/summoning* wizard spell for which Elminster would give no details beyond a slow smile. It must be researched and developed independently by all wishing to exercise it.

Staging: A wizard caught at a disadvantage by a party could well use his pipe's offensive properties to attack the party, or to cause a fire in a party's spell library, foodstores or the like by accidentally or deliberately activating the pipe and leaving it where it will start a blaze. Despite the *summons* upon it, an *eversmoking pipe* cannot be magically traced to its owner. It can be *teleported* or *telekinesed* in an activated state; for example, into an occupied bedroom. (Storm Silverhand told me wryly that Elminster once played this trick on her and a gentleman friend.) Or into a pile of scrolls, or onto a precious map.

A DM could introduce an *eversmoking pipe* into play as useful treasure by using rumors or ancient writings that tell PCs of a strange, wondrous magical device that belches smoke and flame upon command, and lies in a chest guarded by maniacal traps and fearsome monsters—the treasure, of course, being not a *wand of fire* or flamethrower but an innocent *eversmoking pipe.*

Other: Different substances burned in an *eversmoking pipe* have some strange effects. Experimentation in this field continues, but several results are known:

Lamp oil and other volatile fuels cause sudden jets of flame to erupt for one to four rounds (reflected back upon the smoker by the pipe's weather shield), followed by an explosion (damage 2d6) that destroys the pipe.

Wet green leaves produce a thick, black, choking smoke. Once this has begun, the smoker can leave the pipe to create a smoke screen or to force air-breathing creatures out of a confined space. This smoke screen lasts until the pipe's current charges are exhausted, plus one to three rounds (the smoke will clear in only one round if there is a brisk wind). Note that smoke production does not depend upon a constant supply of wet leaves, or anything in the bowl at all, once begun; the pipe's inherent magic creates the smoke. Note that an *eversmoking pipe* that is permanent will *never* stop producing smoke unless destroyed, extinguished, or commanded not to in the proper way. Immersion of either version of the pipe in water or another non-flammable liquid can extinguish the flame and thus end the smoke. *dispel magic* will extinguish the pipe, but not drain it of magic or permanently affect it in any way.

A hot, white smoke, useful for smoking meats, concealing strong smells, and the like, of similar duration can be produced by using dry, dead leaves. Perfumed cloth, paper, or flower petals can be used to scent an area.

Elminster's Own Pipe: The Old Mage has added at least three additional powers to the particular pipe he carries (or pipes; he has several identical "back-up" pipes stashed in various places around Toril and Realmspace). These powers are as follows:

When the pipe is lit and held in the lips, the smoker (only) is protected as if by a *protection from normal missiles,* and all *magic missiles* directed at the smoker are reflected back at their source, striking for their usual damage.

When immersed in water, the pipe immediately creates an *airy water* effect with a 12-turn duration. If the pipe is lit, it goes out at this time, and cannot be ignited while it remains underwater.

Nine times a day the pipe can be held and commanded silently to *dimension door.* This transports the bearer up to 700 yards, moving up to 500 pounds of non-living matter or 250 pounds of living matter that is in contact with the bearer. This can be done once per round (unlike the spell, no "round of recovery" is needed between *dimension door* attempts).

Certain malicious rivals have spread a rumor that Elminster is sufficiently addled as to think of his pipe as a living thing, and often talks to it. This is patently false—the only time I ever heard him talking to it was once when The Simbul used it as the focus of an audible *sending* spell that allowed her to talk back and forth with the Old Mage. On that occasion, I heard Elminster *arguing* with his pipe.

❑

Sea of Fire

Part Two: The Sea Of The Problem

An AD&D® Game Oriental Adventures Scenario for 4–6 characters levels 7–9

By Robert Farnsworth

DM Background

In part one, the PCs searched for the source of a river that was the lifeblood of the steppes. The river had dried up because the water was shunted to the country of Wa through a *gateway of symmetry* created by Jeeng-dai, an evil wu jen.

When the party reached the river's source, they entered a whirlpool caused by water flowing through the *gateway.* The whirlpool carried the party through the *gateway* to the country of Wa.

Wa had been drought stricken. Saito Tomoya, the daimyo of the Wa mountain valley where the water was transported, hired Jeeng-dai to help alleviate the drought. In payment, the daimyo offered the wu jen a rare treatise on immortality. Since Jeeng-dai needed the book for his dark research into forbidden areas of evil magic, he eagerly agreed to help the daimyo.

When Jeeng-dai's efforts worked too well and produced a flood, the daimyo tried to get the wu jen to turn off the water. But Jeeng-dai had returned to his own castle in the mountains, and the daimyo's men have not been able to bring him back.

Furthermore, Jeeng-dai's research into immortality exposed him to poisonous vapors which have driven the wu jen insane. His evil experiments using his servants and local peasants have attracted the notice of the spirit of the Demiplane of Ravenloft. As the PCs enter Wa, Jeeng-dai is preparing another dark rite. This is the final evil act that the wu jen will perform before the Spirit of Ravenloft comes to claim him. The twisted path Jeeng-dai has followed toward immortality has made this mad, evil genius well suited for a role as a lord of Ravenloft.

Players' Background

The last thing you remember is being pulled down into a powerful whirlpool. When you reached the bottom, you caught a quick glimpse of a large silver bowl and a 10-foot-wide ring of silver. Then you passed into a darkness deeper than the blackest night. The next thing you knew, you were lifted from the bone-chilling waters of a vast mountain

lake and onto a stone ledge 30 feet long and 10 feet deep. A Chiang Lung (river dragon) had picked up each of you and deposited you, one by one, on the ledge. As your head clears, the dragon begins talking in perfect Kao Te Shou.

"It is good to see you made it through the gateway. I would have felt much sorrow if you had come to harm after rescuing me from a sure death by dehydration. Even a Chiang Lung can die from thirst if his river runs dry. Ah, but I see a little confusion in your eyes. Let me explain. When you rescued me I looked like a young man. I had to hide my true identity until I could find out what happened to my predecessor, the former guardian of what you call the Tokali River.

"When we discovered the former guardian slain, it became my duty to find his killer and restore the river. I am grateful for your companionship to the source of the river. In fact, if it wasn't for your help I would not have been able to defeat the gargantuan lizard that killed my predecessor. Now that I have returned the favor by pulling you from the chill waters of this mountain lake, I must leave. I must investigate the damage that the flooding of this valley has caused and report it to my superiors."

After the dragon finishes, he turns and with the flick of his tail disappears under the surface of the lake. As you look out over the lake, you notice you are stranded on this ledge. You are surrounded by rock and water. The nearest sign of habitation is an island at least one mile away.

Encounter 1: The Mountain Lake

The PCs' perch is on the west edge of the lake, notched into the side of a mountain that towers above them. The lower slopes of the mountains that surround the lake are covered with a forest of tall, straight birch. Some of the tops of drowned trees still poke up from the surface of the water near the PCs, but beyond these trees there is nothing but naked rock and chilly water.

Unless the PCs can fly, swim in cold water, or climb the rocky slopes, the party is stuck on the mountainside—unless they chop down trees and build a raft.

All the PCs' possessions have survived the trip, but their clothing and fire-making supplies are sodden. Standing in the cool mountain air, the characters will start to chill quickly, running the risk of hypothermia.

Encounter 2: The Island

Though there is plenty of room on your ledge, you see no way to get off, except by plunging back into the cold, mountain lake or laboriously climbing the rocky slopes. The area immediately surrounding you must have been a pleasant woodland glade, but now you see only the forlorn tops of drowned birch trees rising from the water. There are about 30 treetops, and the smell of dead leaves mingles with the scents of the alpine lake and your sodden clothing. The ledge is dry, but cold and hard, and you are starting to shiver in the mountain air. As you study the lake's surface, your eyes return to the island. It's about a mile from your ledge—too far to swim under these conditions. It is large and covered with cherry trees planted in neat rows and laden with fruit. Near the orchard you can see a thread of smoke drifting up into the cold mountain air.

Eventually, the PCs should find a way to the island. The smoke is coming from the cherry grower's minka on the opposite side of the island. It is a simple affair of wood with a thatched roof. The cherry grower has begun his harvest, but he has not been able to inform the daimyo to send someone to pick them up, so there are bushels and bushels of picked fruit with no way to get to market.

When the party reaches the cherry grower's minka, an old man and a young boy step out of the door. Both are armed. The older of the pair is carrying a tonfa, and the young boy is carrying a nunchaku.

The old man steps forward and demands (in Wa) to know the party's intentions. The old man wants to be sure they don't work for the wu jen from the mountains to the north.

Any character who can speak Kozakuran understands what the farmer is saying. Wa and Kozakuran are similar and often can be mistaken for badly accented versions of each other.

Farmer: Int Average; AL NG; AC 5; MV 12; HD 7; hp 42; THAC0 14; #AT 2; Dmg 1-6 (tonfa); SZ M; ML 14; XP Nil.

The farmer is a 7th level bushi. Once a day he can use his ki power to gain two levels for one turn; when using ki he gains 2d10 hit points and the THAC0 and saving throws of a 9th level fighter. The farmer can perform the following martial arts special maneuvers: Feint, locking block, missile deflection, and leap. He has a 32% chance to pick pockets.

Student: Int Average; AL LG; AC 9; MV 12; HD 2; hp 18; THAC0 19; #AT 2; Dmg 1-6 (nunchaku); SZ M; ML 14; XP Nil.

The student is a 2nd level bushi. Once a day he can use his ki power to gain two levels for one turn; when using ki he gains 2d10 hit points and the THAC0 and saving throws of a 4th level fighter. The student can perform the following martial arts special maneuvers: Feint and locking block. He has a 22% chance to pick pockets.

If the PCs reassure the old man and chat with him, they can learn the following:

- Six months ago, the lake the PCs landed in was a mountain valley filled with rolling hills covered with pastures and orchards. A small river meandered down the valley supplying plenty of water for the herds and irrigation for crops in the lowlands. When the drought came, the stream began to dry up, threatening the water supply and causing herdsman and farmers in the valley to fight for the dwindling supply of water.

- One day, a man claiming to be a great and powerful wu jen told the daimyo that he could solve the water problem, if the daimyo made him his closest advisor.

- It wasn't long before the stream began overflowing and flooding the valley. When the wu jen couldn't stop the water, the daimyo banished him. (Actually, Jeeng-dai fled the valley long before the flood, and the damiyo has not been able to bring him back, though only the damiyo and his closest advisors know this.)

- Since the wu jen left, the lowlands have been steadily disappearing. Now what used to be hills are islands.

After the party has explained why they

came to the mountain valley, the old man invites them inside to get warm and to dry their clothes. The party is offered as much cherry-based food as they can carry with them.

Encounter 3: Off to See the Daimyo

After the party leaves the old man's island, they pass smaller, deserted islands. Some of these are covered with trees and are surrounded by the tops of drowned trees.

The largest and tallest island is located in the center of the valley. This island is crowned with a gray stone castle.

The castle's gates and walls are manned by armed soldiers who question the party extensively before allowing them to enter the castle. The guards are suspicious of the PCs, because they obviously are foreigners. And the guards are not sure whether the party could be working for the wu jen who cursed their valley.

After the party has explained who they are, Minori Wada, the sergeant of the guard, asks them if they work for Jeeng-dai:

> "You don't work for that crazy wu jen who caused this flood, do you? If you do, then we don't want your kind in our valley, so go away."

If the PCs foolishly claim to be Jeeng-dai's agents, Minori Wada and all the castle's defenses (which consist of at least 200 1st level bushi armed with bows and an assortment of siege engines, plus various high level samurai and other NPCs) drive the PCs away. If the PCs politely deny any connection with the wu jen, they are invited inside:

> "Well, if you don't work for him, then come on in, I'll get someone who can take you to see the daimyo."

Minori Wada: Int Average; AL LG; AC 5; MV 12; HD 3; hp 24; THAC0 18; #AT 3/2; Dmg 1-8 (battle axe); SZ M; ML 15; XP Nil (200 if he lets the PCs into the castle).

Minori Wada is a 3rd level bushi. Once a day he can use his ki power to gain two levels for one turn; when using ki he gains 2d10 hit points and the THAC0 and saving throws of a 5th level fighter. He has a 24% chance to pick pockets, though he is very unlikely to do so in this encounter.

After the party enters the gate, the guards close the outer door, trapping the PCs inside. When the party looks for ways to get out, they notice many arrow slots filled with arrows.

When the party realizes they are trapped, the inner gate door opens and one of the daimyo's lieutenants steps into the opening, a troop of soldiers armed with bows drawn backs him up.

The daimyo's man also has a priest with him. The priest has a *detect lie* spell running and will tell the lieutenant if he believes the PCs are lying.

> "My name is Maximoto Takashi. I am the daimyo's lieutenant, and you will tell me why you would like to speak with the daimyo."

Maximoto Takashi: Int High; AL LG; AC 1; MV 9; HD 8; hp 58; THAC0 13; #AT 2; Dmg 1-10+6 (katana plus strength, samurai, and specialization bonuses); SZ M; ML 18; XP Nil (500 if he lets the PCs see the daimyo).

Maximoto Takashi is an 8th level samurai. In melee he normally is +1 "to hit," +6 damage. Eight times a day

he can use his ki power to raise his Strength to 18/00 for one round (melee bonuses +5 "to hit" +11 damage). He gets a +1 to all surprise rolls, is immune to all types of fear, and can *cause fear* in creatures of 1 hit die or less (save vs. breath weapon or flee or surrender as the situation warrants).
Magic item: *O-yori +2*

Buni: Int High; AL LN; AC 9; MV 12; HD 10; hp 48; THAC0 14; #AT 2; Dmg 1-6; SZ M; ML 16; XP Nil.

Buni is a 10th level shukenja. Ten times a day he can use his ki to gain a +3 bonus to a saving throw. He can perform the following martial arts special maneuvers: Choke hold and locking block.
Magic item: *Brooch of shielding* (55 hp)
Spells carried: *Augury, know history, cure light wounds* (x5), *hold person, enthrall, withdraw, obscurement, prayer, dispel magic, detect lie*, pacify, true seeing*
* cast and running at the beginning of the encounter.

After finding the party's true reason for coming to the valley, Maximoto Takashi ushers the party to an audience with the daimyo; Buni falls into step behind the party.

> The route to the castle's keep takes you through compounds filled with people forced from their homes by the flood. The deeper you travel into the castle, the less crowded and better the conditions until you get to the main keep. This is the home of the daimyo's family and his immediate relatives. Maximoto Takashi leads you to an empty audience chamber, where he and the priest kneel on rice tatami mats placed off to the right side of the chamber.
>
> Six mats (obviously for you) are lined up before a low platform, which has a padded cushion set in the center.

When the party kneels on the mats, the daimyo walks slowly into the room. Guilt and frustration have worn him down until he is willing to grasp any straw for salvation.

The daimyo is only interested in what is happening to his valley, and he ignores any news of what happens miles away. He is concerned about anything the party might do to help him, but will lend the party no major assistance because he is having enough trouble controlling a valley full of people crammed into his castle.

Assuming the party does not offend the daimyo by breaking protocol, he will discuss the following topics with the party before sending them on their way:

- When the drought started, a mysterious wu jen showed up at the castle gate. The wu jen proclaimed that if he was allowed an audience with the daimyo, he could assure that the valley would never need water again.
- The wu jen was powerful, but he seemed to make outrageous claims without explaining exactly how he would perform this miracle. The wu jen proposed to perform this feat in exchange for a rare treatise on immortality that the daimyo possessed.
- When the water started flowing into the valley, the daimyo and his people were happy, and the daimyo gave the treatise (actually a collection of ancient scrolls) to the wu jen along with a reward of 1,000 bars of silver. Unfortunately, the wu jen left before the water started to flood the valley.
- The wu jen lives in a tower high up in the mountain pass north of the lake. The daimyo sent men to take the wu jen down from the mountain pass, so he could stop the flood. However, only a few survivors returned; all of them reported attacks by wild beasts, evil spirits, and a strange and horrible malaise that inexorably sucked the life from their companions.
- The daimyo really cannot spare any more soldiers. Nor does he need to, as the PCs must deal with the wu jen to save the steppes from the drought.

The daimyo is unwilling to let the PCs question survivors from the expeditions against Jeeng-dai. There are very few of them, and most are performing menial tasks to atone for their failures.

If the PCs volunteer to seek out Jeeng-dai after their audience with the daimyo, they each gain two points of honor. However, they lose one point of honor if they insist on speaking with the disgraced survivors, all low-level bushi. The bushi can only tell the PCs that evil spirits and wild beasts are in the mountains and just getting close to the tower can be deadly. The survivors say the samurai, shukenja, and most of the bushi, died at the tower.

The daimyo will see to it the PCs receive directions to the tower, and he will lend the party boats and pilots to cross the lake and reach the pass. He is unable to offer any food or supplies.

Encounter 4: Playful Kittens

The water has risen to reach the impenetrable forest that covers the mountains. The slopes that are not covered by forest are too steep to walk across and only can be climbed with the appropriate skills and gear.

However, the north end of the lake narrows until it comes into contact with the foot of the pass. The bottom of the pass is choked with trees and undergrowth. The only landing point is a broad path leading up the pass.

The path runs 240 yards before reaching the clearing where a cabin sits:

> You easily march up the path for a few hundred yards until you reach a pleasant clearing which contains a well-kept cabin with a large herb and vegetable garden. As you enter the clearing, two young girls—about 10 years old and obviously twins—come running your way. They seem to be oblivious to your presence. In their small hands, they carry wooden naginatas. Both are absorbed in their play, laughing and fighting like two young kittens. Both girls are dressed in plain, green kimonos.

Unless the PCs immediately make their presence known, the girls won't notice the PCs until their game takes them within 10 feet of the party. The girls scream in utter terror and begin to flee. If the PCs get their attention earlier, the girls simply scream, then stop to study the PCs from a distance.

Both girls are indistinguishable from human girls, unless the party uses a *detect shapechanger* spell.

The PCs, as strangers armed and dressed in fierce armor, frighten the girls. If the PCs are calm, the girls settle down and react with timid curiosity, asking the characters where they come from, were they are going to next, what kind of food they like, etc.

Unfortunately, their mother heard the screams and bounds into the clearing to kill whoever is attacking her babies. She enters in tiger form and tries to place herself between the girls and the party. But, as far the party knows, the tiger is heading for the children:

You soon learn why these children are jumpy; a tiger, silent as a ghost, has leapt from behind the cabin and landed between you and the children. The beast's paws are almost as large as the girls' heads.

The weretigress attacks unless the PCs back away. If a fight breaks out, the girls join the melee on the second round, changing into hybrid form, jumping on the lead fighters and pleading with them not to attack the tiger. If the PCs make any attack on the youngsters—even a non-lethal one, the weretigress goes into a frenzy, gaining +2 to attack and damage rolls. The weretigress does not stop until all the PCs have backed away from the girls.

Mori-Lonata (Weretigress): Int Average; AL N; AC 3; MV 12; HD 6+2; hp 30; THAC0 15; #AT 3; Dmg 1-4/1-4/1-12; SA Rake for 2-5/2-5; SD Hit only by silver or +1 or better magical weapon; SZ M; ML 14; XP 975.

Mori-Balsan & Mori-Deso (Weretiger Cubs): Int Average; AL N; AC 3; MV 12; HD 3; hp 15 each; THAC0 17; #AT 2; Dmg 1-4/1-4; SA Rake for 2-5/2-5; SD Hit only by silver or +1 or better magical weapon; SZ M; ML 14; XP 175 each.

After the fight is over, the youngsters walk up to the tiger and speak to it. The tiger changes first to its hybrid form and then its human form. Changing back to human form heals 1d6x10% of any damage suffered in the fight. If the girls are damaged, they resume human form, too.

If any characters were injured, they have a 1% chance of contracting lycanthropy per point of damage suffered in the melee. Mori-Lanata has belladonna in the garden and will offer it to any injured character. The belladonna has a 25% chance of curing the disease, if taken within one hour. Mori-Lanata will also tell them that anyone who consumes the belladonna will be violently ill for 1d4 days.

The weretiger gives the PCs free room and board for as long as it takes to recover from the belladonna. The party can explore the surrounding forest, or they can choose not to use the belladonna because time is crucial.

If asked about Jeeng-dai, Mori-Lanata tells the party she knows only that the tower is higher up the mountain pass. She met some soldiers who tried to find the wu jen, and even helped the returning survivors recover from their injuries. The only information she got from the survivors was that the others all died horribly and painfully.

Encounter 5: Megalocentipede

After leaving Mori-Lanata's clearing, the PCs can follow the path upward for several hours:

The landscape above the tree line is barren and strewn with rocks of all sizes, though few are smaller than your fists or larger than your heads. The footing is fairly secure. When you glance back toward the valley you can see the submerged outlines of flooded roads and houses. Like the steppe dwellers, many people here have lost their homes. A frigid mountain wind sweeps over the treeless slope, chilling you to the bone. Dark clouds gather in the sky above, and a light rain begins to fall.

Before you have time feel miserable, you spot the fresh carcass of a large white elk lying on the ground.

Behind the carcass, a megalocentipede, still hunting in spite of the cold, awaits the party. The centipede is cunning, and it waits for a PC to come forward to investigate the carcass before running out and attacking. Until the party came along, the centipede had been trying to kill the elk, which really is a greater nature spirit *polymorphed* into an elk. It can't effectively bite the elk, because the spirit is immune to all but the most powerful enchanted weapons. (The spirit is lying here because it lost a fight with a rival spirit and only its *ring of regeneration* kept it alive.)

Megalocentipede: Int Animal; AL N; AC 5; MV 18; HD 3 hp; hp 22; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1-3; SA Poison; SZ M; ML 10; XP 120.

The centipede injects poison on every successful hit. If the victim saves vs. poison, the venom still burns the skin for 1d8 points of damage. If the save fails, the victim suffers wracking pains and violent convulsions after 1d4+1 rounds. Once the convulsions begin, the victim is helpless and loses one point of Constitution each round. When the Constitution score reaches zero, the victim dies.

A *slow poison* spell stops Constitution loss, but does not alleviate the pain, and the victim receives a −4 penalty to all saving throws, attack, and damage rolls.

Encounter 6: The Nature Spirit

Two to five rounds after the centipede attacks the party, the nature spirit's body begins to regain its lost hit points; 10 rounds after that it rises to its feet with one hit point.

After the white elk rises, it is enveloped by a bright, white glow. The light makes it difficult, but not impossible, to see the elk change into a 10-foot-tall, perfectly proportioned man with glowing white skin. (This transformation restores 1d12 hit points to the spirit.) He is wearing a white kimono with a pale blue Ki'rin stitched into the fabric.

Greater Earth Nature Spirit: Int Genius; AL NG; AC 2; MV 12; HD 12; hp 75 (currently 1+1d12; THAC0 9; #AT 2; Dmg 1-10/1-10; MR 70%; SZ L; ML 15; XP Nil.

The spirit can use the following powers once a round at 12th level: *Invisibility, polymorph self, detect evil and good, detect magic, detect harmony, know history* and *aura.* The spirit can *shapechange* five times a day and bestow a *reward* and an *ancient curse* once a week. The spirit is immune to all earth magic and is harmed only by +4 or better weapons.

Magic Items: *Periapt of proof vs. poison, ring of regeneration, scroll* (one or more *neutralize poison* spells)

If any PCs are suffering from the megalocentipede's poison, the spirit will pull out a scroll with enough *neutralize poison* spells on it to cure every victim.

The spirit tells the party there is a tower owned by a powerful wu jen farther up the pass. He also warns them that he feels something unusual in the air and suggests the PCs finish their business and leave the area soon.

Encounter 7: Many Raindrops

As you climb higher the wispy clouds in the sky are borne away by a rising west wind. Thick, dark thunderclouds roll in to replace them. As the clouds become darker, the light rain that has been falling for the past few hours turns into a torrential downpour, cutting visibility to 100 yards. Lighting lashes the peaks surrounding you.

If the party does not seek shelter, they fight the rain for 10 more turns. Each round there is a 1-in-10 chance that a flash flood washes down the mountain pass. The flash flood only occurs once.

If a flash flood hits the party, each character must roll vs. Dexterity or lose his footing. Anyone who fails, slides 120 yards down the pass. Victims take no damage, but they must save for each of their fragile items vs. crushing blow.

After 10 turns, the clouds separate and allow a clear view of the tower:

> The clouds slowly part, and the rain fades until you can see a tall stone tower looming out of the haze 300 yards from where you stand. The tower's windows are dark, except for the two windows in the top floor. The left window glows with a pale blue light, and in the right window you see reflections of orange and red flames.

Encounter 8: Jeeng-dai's Tower

The party approaches the tower without being challenged or detecting any sign of life. The tower is five stories tall, with a large metal-bound door hanging slightly ajar. Inside the door is the dead body of a young soldier:

> When you reach the base of the tower, you find an immense iron-bound door, slightly open. Propped up inside the door is the lifeless body of a young samurai whose armor bears the crest of the Maximoto clan. He holds a spear in his inert fingers. His skin has turned pale gray, and the body has begun to decompose.

This soldier is related to Maximoto Takashi, the daimyo's lieutenant. He was in the group killed during Jeeng-dai's life-draining experiments. His face is sad, but calm. His body could not have been here more than a few days, but it is decayed enough to have been rotting for weeks.

As the PCs climb the steps of the tower, they find dead bodies lying all over the place, both invaders and tower servants. Each body is in the same condition as the dead guard's at the entrance. Maximoto retainers lie where they fell. The wu jen's servants are all positioned as if they had dropped dead in the middle of their household duties. Most of the bodies have a look of fear etched into their features.

1st Floor: Storage/Kitchen

A. Storage Room: This contains enough food and supplies for 50 people for a month. It also is storage for mundane items such as lamps, rope, etc.

B. Kitchen: The bodies of the five servants working here still have utensils clasped in their hands. There are pots on the stoves, but the cooking fires have gone out, leaving half-burned, half-raw food.

2nd Floor: Living Area

Large dining room: This low table has room for at least 12 people. There is no one in the room.

Entertainment room and Library: Books and scrolls line the walls, and comfortable cushions are thrown about. There is no one in the room. The books and scrolls are collections of poetry and stories and have a negligible sale value.

3rd Floor: Bedrooms

Master bedroom: This chamber has a

wooden bed. Elegant tapestries cover the walls and make the chamber look like any other wealthy person's bedroom. The only thing out of place are the dead bodies of six Saito soldiers. All are dead from poison darts; these bodies do not have the gray pallor of the other bodies. All of the traps have been sprung, and the room is safe to enter. The tapestries in this room have a sale value of 800-6,400 tael.

Guest bedroom: This room is nearly a copy of the master bedroom, except there are no dead bodies, and the tapestries are worth 400-1,600 tael.

4th Floor: Servants' Quarters

Five small bedrooms: These rooms have personal knickknacks and small religious statues. There are no dead bodies.

Stairs: The stairway leading to the fifth floor is littered with 15 dead Saito soldiers, all except one died from poisoned darts.

At the top of the stairs is the body of the group's leader; this samurai wears the mon (large flag worn on the back) of the Maximoto clan. He has no poison darts stuck in him and does not have the gray pallor. If a PC wu jen studies the body and makes a successful check vs. one third his Wisdom score, the PC can deduce that the samurai died from *magic missiles*. Any character with the spellcraft nonweapon proficiency also can deduce this with a normal roll.

The stairway has been rigged with a thread tied to a tiny bell placed in Jeeng-dai's lab. The thread is easily detectable.

5th Floor: Laboratory

The lab is filled with arcane equipment and various ongoing experiments. Mysterious tubes and large beakers of glowing chemicals fill one bench. Strange glowing liquids of various colors flow between the beakers and flasks. Pigeon holes, filled with scrolls and research papers, line one of the walls next to the PCs.

If the party found the thread on the stairway and avoided it, they see Jeeng-dai standing in front of the bench facing away from the entrance and the party. He will first cast a *wall of force* using his wu jen ki ability, gaining a +3 initiative bonus. If he successfully casts the *wall*, he uses it to form a protective barrier between himself and the PCs. Once the *wall* is in place, he sits in his "throne," a large chair with a high back, to address the party.

If the party tripped the bell as they climbed the stairs, Jeeng-dai is waiting for them with a *wall of force* already up. The *wall* bisects the lab and prevents anything or anyone from reaching Jeeng-dai. The wu jen sits in his "throne," watching the party as they come through the entrance to his lab.

The "throne" is perched on a low platform that allows a commanding view of the room. Jeeng-dai is taking this opportunity to gloat a little:

> "Ah, greetings. Forgive me, but I can't afford much time to talk. I am in the middle of very important experiments, and I can't spend time with you. So if you will forgive me, I have to get back to my work."

The wu jen walks back to his bench to finish his experiments. As he works, he offhandedly, but smugly, explains what he's been up to:

> "They'll see. They said it couldn't be done. I did it. I found the way to true immortality, and I'll need servants who will stay with me as long as I live.
>
> "True, they won't really be alive, but that doesn't matter, does it?"
>
> While he is speaking, you notice wisps of fog drift in through the window and start to collect on the floor at your feet.

The Spirit of Ravenloft has come to collect Jeeng-dai, and maybe the PCs if they don't flee. The PCs are on the same side of the *wall of force* as most of the wu jen's scrolls and papers. After the wu jen gets back to his bench, he will be too busy concentrating to stop the PCs from grabbing the papers and running for it. If the PCs were able to attack Jeeng-dai before the he could create the *wall*, the wu jen fights to the death, babbling about immortality the whole time. If the PCs slay Jeeng-dai, tendrils of fog rise from the body—the Spirit of Ravenloft isn't about to be denied by something as paltry as Jeeng-dai's death.

Jeeng-dai: Int Genius; AL CE; AC 5; MV 12; HD 9; hp 39; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg 1-4 (dagger); SZ M; ML 20; XP 2,000.

Jeeng-dai is a 9th level wu jen. Once a day he can use his ki to gain a +3 bonus to initiative. Also once a day he can use ki to cast one spell of 6th level or lower at maximum effect. He has a +1 bonus "to hit" with his dagger.

Magic items: *Necklace of missiles* (five *fireballs:* 1@ 8 dice, 2@6 dice, 2@4 dice), *bracers of defense AC 5, ring of regeneration*

Spells carried: *Hypnotism, magic missile* (x4), *phantasmal force, protection from charm, protection from normal missiles, detect shapechanger, remove curse, improved invisibility, dispel illusion, wall of force* (x2), *speak with dead, reanimation, vanish*

The PCs have 10 rounds to grab all of the papers and flee from the tower or they will be transported to the Demiplane of Ravenloft, along with the tower and its dead inhabitants.

Encounter 9: Next Stop Ravenloft?

As the party leaves the tower, the sky darkens and a thick fog rolls toward the tower. If the party doesn't run, they will be surrounded by the fog. The fog has a movement rate of 13.

The fog is 100 yards away from the party when they first notice it. If the fog surrounds them, they finish the adventure wandering through the ethereal fog until they reach Ravenloft. But, that's another story.

If they escape the fog, everyone in the party looks back up the pass to see the fog and clouds clear away from an empty cavity where the tower used to be. The tower, Jeeng-dai, and everything in the tower is now on its way to the Demiplane of Dread.

When the PCs stop to examine the papers they pulled from the laboratory, they find that most of them are notes for Jeeng-dai's research into immortality.

The papers also include five scrolls, each with a single spell: *Giant size, permanency, teleport without error, gate* (mage/wu jen version), and *true seeing.* The fourth scroll had another *gate* spell on it before Jeeng-dai used it to open the *gateway of symmetry* to the source of the Tolkai river.

In addition, the research papers explain how the *gate* spell works when used with a pair of *gateways of symmetry.* The paper explains that the *gate* spell will last for a few more weeks. ❑

The Living City

Signs Painted

Illustration by Laura Kagawa

by Joe Littrell

Signs Painted is housed in a one-story stone building on the edge of Ravens Bluff's waterfront district.

While the building itself is unremarkable, above its door rests a sign that draws locals and visitors of all ages. Every 15 minutes the sign fades to black. A moment later tiny, winged sprites wielding oversized paintbrushes dart from behind it. They dance in the air while painting "Signs Paitned" in glowing, beautiful script. The sprites transpose the "n" and "t" as part of the show. The sign remains with its misspelling for a few moments—until a minute grumbling dwarf climbs over the top of the sign, stomping on the script and moving the two letters to their proper places. The scene lasts five minutes from start to finish, and the sign remains intact for 10 minutes more before the paint fades and the sprites begin again.

The sign is actually a *permanent illusion* commissioned from an unknown wizard by the owner of the shop, Kavan Brenzan.

Open For Business

Kavan's staple is business signs, a venture which at first glance might seem to be self-defeating. (After you paint signs for all the businesses in town, then what can you do?) However, the combination of the Vast's winter and the salt air from Ravens Bluff's harbor plays havoc with even the quality materials Kavan uses—making yearly touch-ups necessary.

Kavan also paints special projects for good customers or for individuals with good reputations. Several taverns in Ravens Bluff sport colorful murals behind their bars, and many a paladin passing through the Living City leaves with his shield bearing the fine work of Kavan Brenzan.

Rates at Signs Painted are reasonable, especially when one considers the fine work and quality materials used. If the customer provides a surface for a sign, Kavan charges 10 to 75 gold pieces for his time and paint, depending on the size of the job and detail expected. He keeps a stock of sign-boards for customers to choose from; these add 5 to 15 gold pieces to a sign's price. If Kavan has no suitable sign-boards in stock, he refers the customer to a reputable member of the Carpenters' and Woodworkers' guild.

Kavan's building is dominated by a large workshop, well-ventilated and thoroughly paint-stained. Along one wall are stacks of precut sign boards, along the other are the pots and tables where Kavan manufactures and mixes his paints. His easel can be found at any spot about the room—depending on his whim. And the room is lit with several *continual light* lamps from the Glow Shop (Newszine issue #48) that are hung at intervals on the walls.

Kavan has walled off one corner of his building to serve as his living quarters. This section contains a bed and drawing table. The legs of the bed are hollow, and Kavan uses them to store his extra funds. The walls of his room are decorated with sketches, with frames and without. The art depicts the various personalities of Ravens Bluff, including the Lord Mayor, Ambassador Carrague, Harlequin, Angel, The Brothers Gaewilder, and many more. If the PCs have had dealings with Kavan or are interesting enough subjects, they may well have their likenesses hanging here, too.

Ravens Bluff residents consider Kavan pleasant enough, if somewhat

reclusive. He is known to keep strange hours, wandering the streets of the Living City in search of a subject for his sketches while he waits for a portion of a sign to dry. He has few true friends, as he is slow to warm to people.

Kavan Brenzan

4th Level Male Human Illusionist

STR: 18
INT: 14
WIS: 14
DEX: 17
CON: 12
CHR: 13

AC Normal: 7
AC Rear: 10
Hit Points: 12
Alignment: Neutral Good
Languages: Common, Elvish, halting Orcish, halting Drow

Age: 27
Height: 5'10"
Weight: 164
Hair/Eyes: Brown/Brown

Weapon Proficiencies: Boxing (two attacks a round, 1-4 damage)
Nonweapon Proficiencies: Reading/writing (15), artistic ability (drawing, painting) (16), paint manufacture (13), paint mixing (14) healing (13), riding/land (17), religion (14), animal handling (13)
Magic Items: *Amulet of proof against location and detection, potion of rainbow hues*

Spells/day: 4 3
Special Abilities: Regenerates two hit points per round, +1 to saving throws versus *sleep, charm*, and *hold* spells

Spell books: Level 1: *audible glamer, cantrip, color spray, find familiar, spook, ventriloquism;* Level 2: *blur, improved phantasmal force, invisibility, whispering wind*

Eclipse, minimal black panther: AL NG; AC 8; MV 8; HD 1; hp 10; THAC0 19; #AT 3; D 1/1/1-2; SA Rear claws for 1/1; SD Surprised only on 1 in 12; S S (3 1/2'long.)

Although Kavan spends many hours outdoors touching up business signs, his skin remains pale. The dark clothes he enjoys wearing, coupled with his brown beard, makes his light skin stand out even more. Few dwell on his complexion, however, as their eyes are drawn to the colorful drops of paint that are spattered over his tunic and boots and to the miniature black panther usually seen brushing up against him.

Kavan is not a native to Ravens Bluff. And although his business is successful here, it is not the profession he wanted to pursue.

As a youth, Kavan Brenzan apprenticed to the illusionist Mekubynns in Waterdeep. All he could think about was the fantastic life that awaited an adventuring wizard. "Think of the glory!" was all he could say to his friends. "Think of the fun!"

The day came when he finally struck out across the wilderness with Mekubynns, and the young Kavan could hardly bear the excitement. His high spirits stayed with him for three years—until he came face to face with the one foe that he could not defeat. The Zhentarim.

His greatest adventure ended with the death of his mentor and his capture and imprisonment by Fzoul Chembryl, minion of the Zhentarim. Chembryl could neither break nor convert the young illusionist, and, in the end, he gave Kavan's tortured, half-dead form to one of his underlings, a mage named Dysklai.

Dysklai was a necromancer, obsessed with the workings of life and unlife. During the next six months, Dysklai used Kavan in his experiments, especially those involving the transference of the blood of one creature to another. It was during this time that he received his special regeneration abilities, as the blood of vampires, trolls, and myriad other monsters bubbled through his veins.

Then, one night, a pair of strong hands loosed his bonds and led him to the gates of Zhentil Keep. To this day, Kavan does not know the identity of his rescuer, though he will swear that he saw a flash of black skin and white hair.

Kavan ran all that night and until noon of the next day before he collapsed. When he awoke, he found that the stranger had given him more than his freedom. Around his neck hung an *amulet of proof against location and detection*, engraved with the sign of a star beneath the ground.

Kavan wandered for a time, trusting no one. He knew that one of the great joys of the lower Zhentarim is to gain the trust of their prisoners, then dash their hopes of escape. Finally, half-mad with fear, Kavan wandered into the area known as the Vast and was soon discovered by the residents of the hamlet of Sevenecho. The residents took him into their homes, and, after a period of two winters, helped restore his self-confidence. They taught him how to fight with his fists to defend himself. And an elderly artist taught him how to paint.

Kavan made several friends in the little village (the Worried Wyvern's east wall still bears a mural which includes most of the hamlet's residents). But he felt it was best to move on to a location where he could not be so easily spotted. Saying goodbye, and with the proceeds from a collection taken by Sevenecho's residents, Kavan left for Ravens Bluff to set up a business. Along the way he acquired Eclipse.

The painter repaid the village long ago, sending them double their gold after one season of business.

Kavan would like to make friends in the Living City, but his distrust of others still lingers, and he can't help but wonder if the next person through his door could be a Zhentarim agent.

Lately word has reached him of Dysklai's search for his one true success—Kavan.

The painter wanders about the Living City to help ease the recurring memories of his torture at the hands of the necromancer. Although he tries to forget his time of captivity, he still retains the desire to know who his mysterious benefactor was, the man(?) who used the sign of the Sunken Star.

Kavan's familiar, Eclipse, a minimal black panther, usually accompanies him around the streets of Ravens Bluff. Eclipse is exceptionally intelligent—and playful. The small panther may sometimes be found chasing, or being chased by, King the Dog. ❑

Pod Mutation Increases

GAMMARAUDERS™ And GAMMA WORLD® Game Scenarios

by Alex Iwanow

The following scenarios use the GAMMARAUDERS game rules from the box set and the *Revenge of the Factoids* expansion. Special rules are provided with each scenario.

Adventure ideas are included for GAMMA WORLD game referees so the GAMMARAUDERS scenarios can be adapted to their campaigns.

Skitsofrantic Bioborgs

This scenario is for two to six bioborg players plus one optional Gammasaurus player. Determine randomly who starts with the Gammasaurus; everyone else selects a Cryptic Alliance and bioborg. The Gammasaurus attains weapons through his hand of cards. A fellowship of at least three players is needed to even up the odds if you use the Gammasaurus.

Read the following before the game begins:

> The Laboratory Rats have done it again. While working on a bioborg mind control spore, the laboratory was attacked by a band of mutazoid psychopaths! The spore, which wasn't thoroughly tested, escaped into the outside world, infecting all bioborgs and their partners. The side effects were not evident until pod mutation season, which started another conflict between the Cryptic Alliances. It seemed that the bioborgs had mental links with each other, which resulted in an odd case of skitsofranticness. Even the mighty Gammasaurus was a victim to this madness.

Setting Up

Set up the game using all available tiles. The Gammasaurus starts on the outer edge of the hex farthest from any fortress.

The Turn

This scenario uses the standard turn sequence, with one exception (see below).

Special Rules

The experimental spore unleashed on the bioborgs transformed them (and their partners) into skitsofrantics. They seem to change their alliances and strategies every few minutes! This is one war the Factoids will never forget.

To role play split personalities, at the end of each turn the players will leave their bioborgs on the table in front of them, then rotate clockwise one seat. This gives each player a new bioborg. That new bioborg assumes the Cryptic Alliance, popcorn, and fortress of the player's previous bioborg. The players retain their original hands of cards.

Victory Conditions

The game is won when a bioborg trashes three of his opponent's fortresses. This means that if a player with a bioborg trashes two fortresses and then shifts chairs, a new player could win by trashing one more base with that bioborg. The Gammasaurus cannot win.

GAMMA WORLD Game

Imagine the surprise on your players' faces as their characters' orders are changed every minute. They will never be sure who is friend or foe. And if this isn't enough to keep them on their toes, they have a diabolic Gammasaurus and other enemy mutants to worry about!

As The World Burns

This scenario for two to six players depicts a war in which the bioborgs have nuclear arms. Of course, bioborgs always have been using nuclear-powered flamers, sluggers, etc., but nothing that would nuke an entire hex tile!

There's a down side to these powerful nuclear arms, of course. To harness such powerful atomic energy, the bioborg must pop eight pods at once.

Read the following before the game begins:

> On a recent recon mission to the Marvelous Moss Marshes, a team of Men in Black agents observed a band of mutant humans harnessing the energy of eight popped pods. This projected a nuclear laser beam that obliterated a mountain range. The team brought this information back to their superiors, who sold the technology to the other Cryptic Alliances in exchange for several ancient recipe books on fine pastries. However, since the nuclear power requires a large number of pods to work, another pod mutation war started.

Setting Up

Set up the game using all available tiles. After the initial hand of cards is dealt, each player selects a weapon to be his permanent "nuke'em" arsenal. This will be the implement capable of destroying entire hexes during the game. It doesn't matter what the damage or range value of the weapon is. The nuke'em weapon can be taken from and/or returned to the hand at will, just as long as the player does not exceed his card limit. The weapon does not add to the bioborg's attack or defense value when in the combat stage of the turn.

Each player must write the name of their nuke'em weapon on a piece of paper folded over and labeled with their name. This will settle any disputes of cheating.

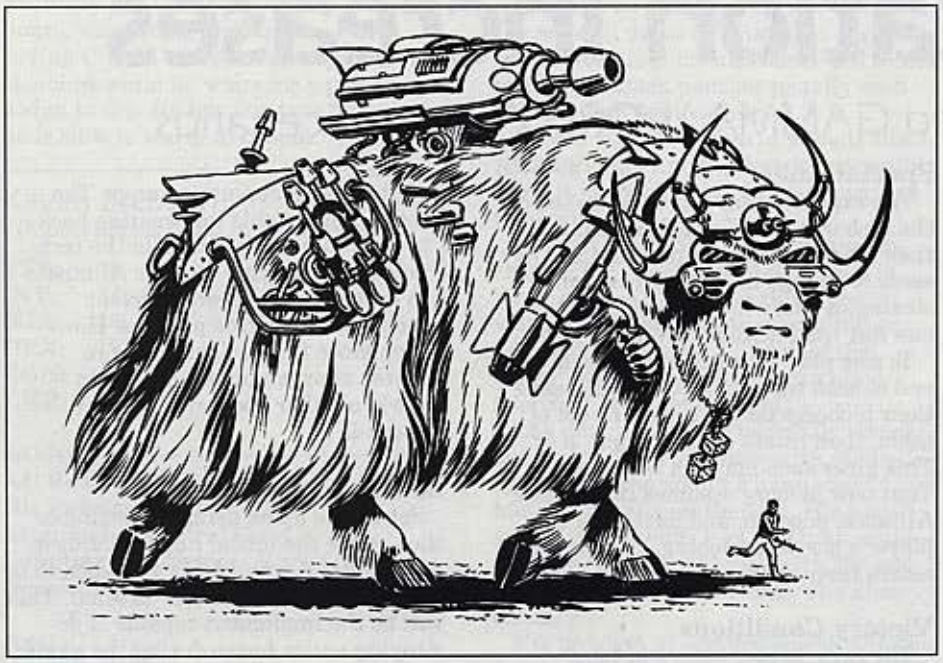
The Turn

This scenario uses standard turn sequence.

Special Rules

To fire a nuclear laser, beamer, water cannon, etc., the bioborg must possess the nuke'em weapon chosen during setup, along with eight pods. Since a bioborg can only carry five pods, he must have at least three pods already stored in his fortress. This means that not only must the bioborg have a fortress, but he must also fire from it. When a player declares he is going to pop eight pods to make a nuclear attack, he turns his nuke'em card face up and chooses a target hex.

Once a hex is fired upon with a nuclear weapon, the tile is destroyed. All fortresses and popcorn are automatically removed from play. The player responsible for this bombardment is fully credited with any nuked fortresses. If there



is a bioborg in the nuked hex, it must check to see if its weapons survived the attack. Roll 2d6 minus the number of pods that the bioborg is carrying (include pods stored in any fortress within the same area to this penalty). That roll must exceed a weapon's damage value for the weapon to survive. All pods in the area are history. Now, flip the tile over onto its colorless side, as this tile is now considered an "ocean of muck-hex." Treat it as one big area, acting as water terrain would. The nuked bioborg, however, is blown into the sky. It hasn't died (these guys regenerate so fast that if the world imploded, they would still retain a pulse). To see where the bioborg lands, roll 2d6, placing the counter on the numbered pod mutation area just rolled. Reroll if that specific area has been previously nuked. The bioborg retains all weapons surviving the earlier 2d6 roll, but all pods are lost forever. In addition, that bioborg player skips step 4 of the turn sequence, as regeneration from nuclear explosion requires time.

If a nuke'em weapon is destroyed during the course of the game, it cannot be regained. However, it may be replaced by any missile weapon card after popping two pods. Remember, missiles are one-shot weapons.

GAMMA WORLD® Game

It is bad enough that the player characters are stalked by squadrons of gammajets, hordes of hovertanks, legions of infantry, and indestructible bioborgs. Now they have to worry about discovered nuclear arms. It looks like the PCs will have to be stealthy, as they are hired to steal pods from enemy fortresses—hopefully preventing their own land's transformation into an ocean of muck.

Peek-A-Bool

This is yet another scenario for two to six players. Read the following before the game begins:

> The annual Bioborg Breakdancing Festival was a financial success. Although the holiday resulted in violent earthquakes which turned the continent into islands, it failed to end the Cryptic Alliance war.
>
> When the land split, nuclear radiation escaped, mysteriously transforming the pod mutation areas into teleportation zones.

Setting Up

The initial setup requires the placement of the numbered tiles only. To simulate the islands described, place these hexes anywhere on the game table so they are not in contact with each other. Then, if you choose to include the unnumbered tiles in play, attach them to the previously placed tiles to increase the land mass of the islands. After this is done, the players can choose bioborgs and place fortresses normally.

Do not include Kizaro the Chimpanzero in this scenario, because his flying ability will unbalance things.

The Turn

This scenario uses standard turn sequence, with an exception pertaining to the 4th Movement stage.

Special Rules

There are 11 islands with bioborgs and fortresses scattered all over. How do you fight a war? Teleportation.

The yellow-orange pod mutation areas are teleportation zones. Anyone or anything (including bioborgs, popcorn, and pods) that enters such an area must roll 2d6 to establish their destination. The number rolled is the island number they move to. The player can choose any terrain area on the island that his bioborg, popcorn, or pods appears on. If the bioborg has popcorn traveling with him, they are teleported to the same location. After teleporting, the Movement stage for the teleportee ends.

If a player does not want his bioborg to transport randomly, the bioborg can burn a pod while teleporting. This allows the bioborg to appear anywhere on any game tile.

Now comes pod mutation. Since pods appear in teleportation zones, they can teleport, too. Designate a player to roll 2d6 to determine where a pod appears (except when it is initially placed through a Factoid card). Roll each turn for teleporting until the transporting pod is somehow retrieved.

Victory Conditions

The game is won with a total fortress trash-record of three.

GAMMA WORLD Game GMs

Frustrate the player characters by sending them on a mission to retrieve pods from various islands. It will keep them on their toes to grab the pods before the pods teleport. Spice up the game by having the PCs infiltrate fortresses to learn where pods are located. Consider giving the PCs gammajets or some means of flying to make their island hopping easier and less random. ❑

With Great Power

Welcome to the Real World!

by Dale A. Donovan

What would superheroes do if they existed *in our world?* How would they occupy themselves without staving off alien invasions every week or two? How could they get through the week without having 16 supervillains to punch out? (Okay, if you accept the existence of superheroes, human nature tells us that supervillains would also exist. That's fine, but a balanced super campaign should have more than just an endless stream of baddies.) How would they make their livings? Well, this column will discuss "real-world heroics" that come up when real-world heroes appear in your campaign. Don't worry—there's plenty to do!

Natural Disasters

One of the most "heroic" activities for real-world heroes would be averting natural disasters or assisting victims once tragedy has struck. Here are just some of the possibilities.

- Imagine how useful a weather-controlling (for the rain he could summon) or fire-controlling hero would have been during the San Francisco Bay Area firestorm several months ago. These heroes could also help extinguish or prevent the annual brush and forest fires that occur throughout the world.

- Weather-control heroes could relieve droughts and avert floods, tornadoes, hurricanes, and other kinds of destructive weather. They could be the ultimate meteorologists—since they'd never be wrong! (And neither would you if you could change the weather to fit your forecast.)

- Air- or weather-controlling heroes could make great strides in cleaning the world's air, stopping acid rain, or even rejuvenating the ozone layer.

- Earth-controlling or other geologically-inclined heroes could periodically and safely relieve tectonic stresses near faultlines and active volcanoes. They could also check dormant volcanic regions to see if they've remained dormant since the last time they were checked.

Heroes could perform these activities out of the goodness of their hearts or they could do it full-time for the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, N.O.A.A. (National Oceanographic & Atmospheric Administration), the U.S. Geologic Survey, various United Nations organizations, etc.

Public Service

Another important area for real-world heroes' talents would be in public service, especially in various aspects of law enforcement.

- Superpowered police would be nice to have around, especially during riots or other situations requiring crowd control. The crime rate might even drop if criminals knew they could be arrested by someone who can run faster than their getaway car, or someone who could lift the car clean off the ground—with them in it!

- The courts could use "juries" of telepaths to quickly determine suspects' guilt or innocence, as well as any mitigating circumstances regarding the crimes the person is suspected of committing. (This idea does bring up the topic of law, the courts, and how superheroes work within that system, but that goes beyond the scope of this column. If you want more information on this topic, write and let me know.) Telepaths could also determine suspects' mental health and whether they should be sent to prison or to a hospital.

- Telepaths and healers could work wonders by curing those who are mentally or physically ill or hospitalized.

- Every fire department in the country would want a fire-, water-, or air-controlling hero on their fire trucks.

- Super-strong heroes would be very valuable to rescue squads and E.M.T. (Emergency Medical Technician) teams. After all, they are "walking jaws of life."

- Clairvoyant, precognitive, or postcognitive heroes could help people recover lost items or find missing persons. Precog heroes could make a living by advising others on "what their future holds," telling the police where the next bank robbery or drug deal will take place, etc. Postcog heroes could also solve most crimes by just entering the scene of the crime and using their "see the past" abilities.

- What wonderful, life-saving devices or simple conveniences could the scientific heroes come up with if they devoted themselves full-time to research and study. Imagine Reed Richards, Tony Stark, and Hank Pym working together to find solutions for toxic waste disposal, "cold fusion," "warm superconductors," or cures for diseases like cancer or AIDS. Several heroes did try to find a cure for cancer when one of their own, the original Captain Marvel, was afflicted with the disease in the graphic novel, *The Death of Captain Marvel.* The title of the graphic novel gives you a clue as to how successful they were—though there were extenuating circumstances. The characters also briefly discussed why they never got together earlier to try and find a cure for this awful disease. I highly recommend the graphic novel, if you can still find it in the comic stores.

- The mail would move a lot quicker with a few super-fast heroes in the Post Office.

Many of the duties listed here could require a hero's full-time devotion. But hey, even heroes have bills to pay. Heroes could work for local, state, or federal governments. Many of the "brainy" heroes might also work for the top universities, teaching and conducting research with private or corporate funding.

Para-Military

This area of real-world heroics is occasionally seen in the comics themselves. Remember SHIELD's old Super-Agent program, and the current benefactor of the X-Factor team—the U.S. government. As a result, this section need not be as detailed as the others, as examples already exist in the comics.

Continued on page 31

The Living Galaxy

Better Heroes, Better Cities—And Better Ways To Steal Them

by Roger E. Moore

To be a good game master, as everyone knows, you have to know the rules of the game. To be a *great* game master, however, you have to go beyond the published rules and supplements. You have to hunt down new ideas ruthlessly, seize them without mercy, bash them into proper shape, then drag them back to your GM's high command to serve your campaign and players in the best possible ways. It seems like a thankless task until you see smiles break out among the players at the conclusion of your game; then you know it was all worthwhile.

No one has ever published a role playing system that covered every possible plot, useful rule, imaginable character type, or glittering treasure. If you look carefully through some of the published material for games other than the ones you play, you are certain to discover marvelous bits that you can gleefully steal and add to your own campaign—without a soul in the world who can say boo about it. This kind of "theft" is especially important if the science fiction system you are using is orphaned (no longer supported by its publisher) or if the players have decided to make their characters wander off into uncharted regions of space.

Let me make it absolutely clear here that I am *not* advocating actual theft or plagiarism. I *am* advocating GM creativity, and this means that you, as a GM, should be open to new ideas, new concepts, and new ways of seeing the same old things. If you want to be a great GM, you should develop a talent for picking out the best the world has to offer, then making it fit the needs of the game campaign you run. Science fiction role playing games, in my opinion, are especially needful of creative input.

This particular column is going to look at specific prey—ah, I mean *resources*—you can hunt down on your next expedition for new ideas. In POLYHEDRON® Newszine #65, I touched on using non-SF and non-gaming sources for new campaign ideas. Here, we'll focus on using materials from games that you might not play. Gaming bigotry will not serve you well; every science fiction game has at least something to commend it. Some of the supplements detailed here are so useful that I recommend them for *any* science fiction campaign. Whereas issue #65 centered around developing starports, this issue's column will cover sources that offer either role playing tips for player characters (PCs) and nonplayer characters (NPCs), or materials useful for creating science fiction cities.

At the 1991 GEN CON® Game Fair, I was fortunate enough to receive a number of SF game products directly from the people making them. Many of those products appear in this column, but whether I used their products or not, I offer my thanks to the following companies: FASA Corporation; Games Workshop; Task Force Games; R. Talsorian Games; Game Designers' Workshop (GDW); Steve Jackson Games; Palladium Books; West End Games; Chaosium, Inc.; Iron Crown Enterprises (ICE); and Leading Edge Games. May your names and products live on into the next millennium.

You Are What You Do

In some games, little or no attention is paid to character development and personality; the role playing seems to boil down to the best use of your character's statistics. We are not born knowing how to be actors. We have to learn to role play, and we need good teachers. People who have just started to role play do best when given clear guidelines on how their PCs might be expected to think and react. Even gaming's old-timers find personality guidelines useful in developing their own unique adventurers. GMs need to know how to role play, too, given the vast number of NPCs they control in each game.

In most of the game sources cited here (in no particular order), role playing notes are given as part of the descriptions of character occupations; those notes are helpful, but not very extensive, and they are neither complete nor gospel (no two grizzled veterans are alike, after all). Only a few games present more detailed personality-generation notes to enable you to create new characters or revitalize established ones.

Mekton II game, by R. Talsorian Games, Inc. This mecha-combat RPG received much praise in this column in issue #63 for the depth of its PC-history generation tables, found on pages 6-12 in the rule book. These tables, collectively called the "Lifepath," are divided into sections detailing your PC's family history, friends and enemies, love life, physical appearance, and personality. Were your parents lost on a secret mission? Are you trying to clear your name? Who is your best friend and worst enemy, and what is your most prized personal possession? You'll have all the basics with just a few 1d10 die rolls. Better still, this system can be used with any science fiction game. This one still wins much praise from me.

Cyberpunk 2020 game, by R. Talsorian Games, Inc. This game, too, has a marvelous "Lifepath" section (pages 22-29) with a table for ethnic origins, too (these apply largely to Earth-based cultures and ethnic groups, but they're worth a long look). As with the previous game's "Lifepath," this section works with almost any science fiction game on the market. Roll on it and see what you get. I recommend it.

Shadowrun game, by FASA Corporation. This game's rule book is particularly intriguing for its use of Archetypes, models for futuristic occupations and the personality types that go with them. Each Archetype is briefly detailed with quotes, an overview description, and typical attributes, skills, and possessions. The quotes are the best part, giving intuitively sharp images of the kind of people typically found in each profession. On the bad side, there seems to be a preponderance of characters in the game with tough-guy attitudes, with each profession trying to out-tough the rest, but you will still find much of use here in getting a thumbnail sketch of how to role-play many sorts of futuristic personalities. The Archetypes include the decker (computer hacker or "technomancer"), detective, gang member, former company man, mercenary, rocker, tribesman, and an assortment of magic-using types. The rigger is intriguing, being a person who is cybernetically connected to a vehicle or security

system, feeling the system's actions as his own.

Also included are Contacts, brief descriptions of NPCs who might be met during an adventure. Some of these are interesting enough to form the basis of PCs, such as the bounty hunter, company man, gang boss, and corporate street cop. See pages 162-173.

Important note: The *Shadowrun* game allows the use of magic, making it not strictly science fiction, but Archetypes for spell-casting beings can be easily used for characters with "scientific" mental powers (usually called psykers, psionicists, or mentalists). You will also find fantasy-based races such as elves, dwarves, orcs ("orks"), trolls, and the like in the rules as PCs, but it's a snap to make them into aliens, alternate human races, or alternate human ethnic groups. Don't be put off; just put it to use.

Other *Shadowrun* supplements present more material for role playing. For example, *Sprawl Sites* offers eight new Archetypes and 34 new Contacts. Archetypes here include the bodyguard, former military officer ("low-grade"), and former tribal warrior. Among the Contacts can be found the fan, corporate wage slave, fire fighter, Mafia soldier, and newsman. The *Street Samurai Catalog* has four racially based sorts of street samurai, the urban mercenaries of the future.

MechWarrior game (1991 second edition), by FASA Corporation. These mecha-combat RPG rules for the *BattleTech* game universe, in addition to a nice character-generation system, offer 16 character Archetypes on pages 33-48. Though rather brief and lacking the hallmark quotes found in the *Shadowrun* game, these Archetypes can each serve as a general "character canvas" on which you can paint special details and quirks to fully flesh out your hero. You can choose from the bounty hunter, grizzled veteran, hotshot, House regular, scout, free trader, tech, aerojock, hulking brute, scoundrel, technophile, young noble, or one of the selectively bred or gene-engineered humans of the Clans. More experienced players can generate new Archetypes from the ground up, with the GM's assistance and approval. Notes are given on developing a hook, "the central concept around which a character revolves" (page 14). Though many of the abilities given for each Archetype apply only to the *MechWarrior* and *BattleTech* games, these are still worth a look if you're fishing for a new type of hero or scoundrel to play.

Warhammer 40,000 game, by Games Workshop. Though this is a miniatures combat system, there is a wealth of role-playing bits scattered throughout the main rule book (*Rogue Trader*) and some of the supplements. Cast against the backdrop of one of the most brutal and bleak future histories I've yet seen in any game, the characters are often marked by ruthlessness, savagery, fearlessness, and cunning. It might be difficult to use some of these character types in less-violent settings, unless you assume that your character's home society was particularly awful. *Rogue Trader,* for instance, details the mental workings of Inquisitors, who freely use torture and execution to root out cults and forces that threaten the Imperium; psykers, humans with psychic powers who are threatened by demonic entities as well as by their own government; blind and mentally unstable Astropaths, who can telepathically speak with others of their kind over interstellar distances; Rogue Traders, independent Imperial agents who serve at once as explorers, diplomats, and pirates of the worst sort; Assassins, politically com-

manded killers who are regarded as "diplomatic agents"; and Space Marines, the ultimate human soldiers in a future in which total war is regarded as a normal way of life, and weapons of mass destruction are used as often as bullets.

Of interest, too, are the numerous quotes and documents scattered throughout most *Warhammer 40,000* texts. These often give intense insights into the goals, concerns, philosophies, and aspirations of those who live in this darkest of dark futures (from *Rogue Trader:* "Here I am and here I shall die."—page 34; "For every battle honour, a thousand heroes die alone, unsung, and unremembered."—page 72; "For a warrior the only crime is cowardice."—page 238). Characters adhering to these ideals will certainly be grim, and more work is needed to flesh such personalities out, but it's a good start if you're in the mood for *Terminator*-style role playing.

For a game made only for miniatures battles, this system has some nice potential role-playing bits. *Rogue Trader* has the most usable material in this regard; the various supplements for this game are more concerned with campaign background, painting tips, and specifics on fighting tabletop wars. Final note: You might look up Ken Rolston's article, "Orcs in Space!" which converts the *Warhammer 40,000* system to a simple role-playing format; it's in DRAGON® Magazine issue #149.

Dark Conspiracy game, by GDW. More than 40 civilian occupations are presented in these near-future horror/science-fantasy rules, but only a few have any notes on role-playing. The notes consist mainly of the major concerns and goals that the people in each job category have; only a few offer role-playing hints. Some occupations are quite new to the RPG field; for example, a cyborg escapee (perhaps more a way of life than an occupation) is a paranoid, man-machine amnesiac on the run from a corporation—a potentially great character. You might want to flip through the "Careers" section and see if something clicks, but you'll still have to add all the color to the final picture.

Merc: 2000 game, by GDW. On pages 50-51 of the rule book are eight stock military-career NPCs, each detailed enough to serve as the basis for a PC. The local recruit, the company man, the freedom fighter, the maniac, the ice man—all present interesting possibilities if you don't mind playing active-duty soldiers, mercenaries or not.

Star Wars: The Roleplaying Game, by West End Games. The neatest thing about this system is its use of character templates, which are descriptions of character archetypes that can be found in the *Star Wars* universe. Personality and background notes are supplemented with quotes (as in FASA's *Shadowrun* game). Some character types are actually alien races, which is fine if you don't make a distinction between a wookie pilot and a wookie mechanic in personality (humans probably wouldn't know the difference anyway). The smuggler, bounty hunter, armchair historian, and a number of others are applicable to many campaigns, and you shouldn't have much trouble adapting them and getting a feeling for how they act.

Space Master Companion I, by ICE. This supplement booklet has a few new professions in it, devoid of role playing hints, but it does offer random-roll tables for background information on your character. Is he a berserker or a coward? Is she a light sleeper, or does she have an intriguing personality? The character can even be cursed or jinxed, have genetic defects, or possess unusual personality traits, both bad and good. Check sections 4.0 and 5.0 for details; they make an interesting, if rather chaotic, alternative.

Central Casting: Heroes For Tomorrow, by Task Force Games. I've saved the best for last. This is an extremely detailed book designed for use with any science fiction role playing game, and it offers the most comprehensive system of character creation tables I've seen. Almost every aspect of your hero's personality and background can be generated here, from birth details (were you born on a submarine?) to exotic life events (was your mind transferred into an altered clone?). Best of all, you can also simply shop for character traits and pick the ones you like best. I strongly recommend this product; it's well worth purchasing for any gaming group, as everyone should get something useful out of it.

The Heart of the City

In issue #53, this column discussed ways to create cities for your campaign. A few of the materials I picked up at the 1991 GEN CON® Game Fair had some interesting ideas on this topic, and these are mentioned below.

Howling Wilderness, a *Twilight: 2000* supplement, by GDW. The most interesting urban-oriented part of this product, which details the United States of America following a limited nuclear strike and much civil unrest, is the "Twilight Citymaker" (pages 23-26). This is a group of 90 geomorphic map sections (using a scale of 1 mm = 5 meters) that referees can photocopy. Everything from small villages to large urban jungles can be assembled, though the map sections include a lot of what either can be rubble or earthen walls—perfect for primitive, war-torn, nuked-out, or disaster-struck areas, but of little use for high-tech cities. You should get some good mileage out of this for close-in, high-adventure scenarios on many planets, however. Get the book and photocopy the "Twilight Citymaker" to your heart's content.

Merc: 2000 game (rules mesh with the *Twilight: 2000* game), by GDW. This near-future role playing game about soldiers of fortune has several sections of interest to urban developers in SF campaigns. The chapter "Time, Travel and Encounters" has numerous floor plans for military buildings, ranging from a checkpoint to a bunker, with a mansion and a POW camp as well. The unlabelled chapters showing sample missions and campaigns for this game also have grid plans for a mountain village, a slum neighborhood, and other combat zones of the future.

Bangkok: Cesspool of the Orient, a supplement for the *Twilight: 2000* game (2nd Edition), by GDW. This horribly named booklet is filled with maps of urban areas and individual buildings across a near-future version of Thailand. A very clever GM with some spare time could use much of this booklet in developing an other-planetary nation (colonized by Southeast Asians, maybe) whose culture and environment matches that of this country; the chances that anyone in your gaming group will recognize the map of downtown Bangkok are slim at best. The great amount of potentially useful material for urban campaign planning makes this booklet worth a long look, despite its name.

Continued on page 31

The Living City

The Red Ravens

by James P. Buchanan

The Red Ravens maintain a fire fighting force in Ravens Bluff. In the more lawless years of the Living City, criminals attacked those who tried to put out fires started by arson—so Red Raven membership was kept secret to protect the fire fighters.

Membership remains somewhat secret today, although many members have a hard time keeping the secret after a several months, especially when the townspeople recognize them at fires. There currently are about 200 active members in the Red Ravens; the majority are line fire fighters. Some of the more important members include:

Nova Moonstar, Fire Marshal

9th Level Female Half-Elf Wizard

STR: 11
DEX: 16
CON: 15
INT: 18
WIS: 14
CHA: 9

AC Normal: 5
AC Rear: 7
Hit Points: 37
Alignment: Lawful Good
Languages: Common, Elvish, Gnoll, Goblin, Orcish, Pixie
Age: 189 (appears 30)
Height: 6′
Weight: 155
Hair/Eyes: Black/Gray-blue

Weapon Proficiencies: Dart, staff
Nonweapon Proficiencies: Ancient history (17), engineering (15), etiquette (9), land-based riding (17), rope use (16), reading/writing (19), spellcraft (16)
Magic Items: *Ring of regeneration, ring of fire resistance, boots of speed, iridescent ioun stone,* four *darts of homing,* numerous spell scrolls and potions
Spells/day: 4 3 3 2 1

Spell Books: Level One: *Alarm, armor, color spray, jump, read magic, sleep, spider climb, Tenser's floating disc;* Level Two: *Continual light, flaming sphere, knock, magic mouth, strength, wizard lock;* Level Three: *Fireball, fly, secret page, slow;* Level Four: *Dimension door, fire shield, ice storm, wall of ice, wizard eye;* Level Five: *Cone of cold, passwall, wall of stone*

Nova has very fair skin, a slender figure, catlike grace, and wavy, hip-length, black hair. She usually wears a sky blue shirt, dark green trousers, brown gloves, and her *boots of speed.* Nova always carries two *darts of homing* on her belt. Before fighting a fire, Nova quickly puts up her hair.

Nova was born in the city of Callidyrr, in the Moonshae Isles; her family owns an inn there called *The Sleeping Sentry.* During her childhood, Nova's magical abilities were discovered and developed by a local wizard. When Nova was 19, she began adventuring. Two years later she Nova caught a ship to Ravens Bluff and decided to stay.

Nova started as a line fire fighter one year after settling in the Living City, and she became a fire captain shortly after that. Eight months ago, Nova was elected by her peers to be their current fire marshal, and is doing an excellent job. Nova's day-to-day duties in the society have little to do with fighting fires. Nova approves people for membership, raises money, and works with the city government to help extinguish and prevent fires.

Nova is best known as an author of five books on fire fighting, and she is rumored to be writing at least one more. Nova has become independently wealthy, as at least two other cities have paid her for advice on how to set up their own fire brigades. Most people agree that Nova is running the best team of fire fighters in the Realms.

Nova will be curious about any player character who joins at least one trade guild in Ravens Bluff. (Though the Red Ravens have a member of the thieves guild in their ranks, Nova and her predecessors have tended not to recruit thieves.) Nova usually restricts her inquires to questioning the character's fellow guild members and other associates, but there is a 10% chance that Nova actually will want to meet and interview the PC face to face. Whether the PC is asked to join the Red Ravens is up to the DM. If the PC owns a business, Nova will want to meet the character 75% of the time to discuss fire prevention methods.

Nova likes to spend her free time either riding outside the city or walking along the seashore to watch the waves roll in. She looks forward to getting letters from her family, who still live in Callidyrr.

Nova's only fear is that a raging fire will burn down half the city while she is fire marshal. Consequently, Nova spends one hour or more every day making sure all Red Ravens members and their equipment are ready to fight and put out any fire.

Nova thinks arsonists are evil incarnate. She will help the city watch track down and capture anyone who has intentionally set buildings on fire.

Pere Marquette, Head Groom

7th Level Human Male Fighter

STR: 18/27
DEX: 15
CON: 16
INT: 13
WIS: 13
CHA: 14

AC Normal: 9 (4 with chain mail)
AC Rear: 10 (5 with chain mail)
Hit Points: 64
Alignment: Neutral Good
Languages: Common, Horse Barbarian, Elvish
Age: 38 (appears 27)
Height: 5′ 6″
Weight: 135 lbs.
Hair/Eyes: Dark Brown/Hazel

Weapon Proficiencies: Battle axe, composite short bow, harpoon, javelin, lance, long sword
Nonweapon Proficiencies: Animal handling (12), animal training (horses) (13), land-based riding (16), animal lore (13), wagon driving (15)
Magic Items: *Long sword +3 frost brand, ring of animal friendship, ring of the ram*
Mount: White heavy warhorse named South Wind: Int Animal; AL N; AC 7; MV 15; HD 3+3; hp 27; THAC0 17; #AT 3; Dmg 1-8/1-8/1-3; SZ L; ML 7. South Wind is a single-rider horse (see DMG, page 36) who will come when Pere calls his name.

Pere has an excellent physique and has tanned skin from working outdoors. He wears his hair in a ponytail which reaches his mid back. Pere once drank a *potion of longevity* and now is physically 27 years old. Pere usually wears a short tunic, trousers, high soft boots, and an ankle-length cape trimmed with fox fur. He often wears chain mail, but takes it off when fighting fires. If Pere has to travel more that a mile, he rides South Wind.

Three generations ago the Marquette family began to perfect the art of wagon building on the Nomad Steppes. Over many years, the family built a small trading empire of wagon caravans. Pere Marquette is the fifth child of this wealthy family.

Pere started training as a horseman and wagon driver at an early age, and became an expert by the time he was a teenager. Pere was 17 when he realized that total control of the family business would go to his older brothers and sisters. Pere did not wish to be a henchman under the direct control of his older siblings, so he left the Nomad Steppes and became a mercenary.

Pere spent nine years training others in the art of mounted fighting, horsemanship, and wagon driving in the city-states around the Sea of Fallen Stars before moving to Ravens Bluff. After building an excellent reputation for his skills in horsemanship, Pere was approached by the Red Ravens to teach new members how to control their six-horse wagon teams. After a week of friendly persuasion and ever increasing salary promises, Pere accepted the position of head groom.

The duties of the head groom are to take care of the horses, hire and train stable hands, and to hitch up the fire wagons during a fire alarm. Pere lives across the street from the main hall, so when the fire bells start ringing he can get to the fire hall or the stables within one minute. Pere always is looking for quality help, and might hire PCs with horsemanship skills on a temporary or permanent basis.

Pere Marquette is very happy working for the Red Ravens. He makes all the major decisions concerning the horses, while delegating the day-to-day job of taking care of the horses to stable hands. Pere is a caring and professional groom and will never allow anyone to mistreat a horse in his presence. Pere dislikes to be called a groom, and prefers the title "Equestrian."

John House, Raven Wrangler

3rd-Level Male Wereraven Fighter

STR: 16
DEX: 18
CON: 15
INT: 12
WIS: 11
CHA: 13

AC Normal: 6
AC Rear: 10
Hit Points: 27
Alignment: Neutral Good
Languages: Common, Wharf Slang
Age: 21
Height: 6'
Weight: 130 lbs.
Hair/Eyes: Black/Brown
Weapon Proficiencies: Dagger
Nonweapon Proficiencies: Animal handling (10), animal training (crows/ravens) (11), endurance (15), swimming (16)
Languages: Common
Magic Items: Necklace with a *continual light* spell cast on it, *knife +2*
Wereraven* Form (Blackthunder): Int Very; AL NG; AC 7; MV 12, Fl 18 (C); HD 3; hp 27; THAC0 17; #AT 3; Dmg 1-3/1-3/1-4; SZ M; ML 14.
* New monster described at the end of this column.

John looks like a normal human with well-developed chest and arm muscles. John normally wears a red uniform. A set of keys to the attic hang from his belt, and he wears his *knife +2* strapped to his right hip.

John has control of his lycanthropy and can change form at will (he is a "true" lycanthrope, see MC 1). As a wereraven, John goes by the name of Blackthunder, who looks like a 6-foot tall humanoid raven with an 11-foot wingspan. John can communicate with and control most birds.

John grew up as a foundling orphan in a small house near the harbor. When John was seven years old his adopted mother, Emma House, found him feeding part of his lunch to a raven. When Emma walked toward John, the raven flew away. Emma told John that the family had to save every copper they earned and could not waste food feeding wild birds. John looked up at her and said, "But mother, the bird was hungry, and it promised to give me a pretty thing if I gave it some food." Before Emma could reply, the raven flew by and dropped a silver coin at John's feet.

John's parents soon convinced him to use his abilities to put on a bird act. This was so well liked that Mooney & Sons Circus offered John his own act. However, the Red Ravens offered John the high-paying job of taking care of their birds and helping the city fight fires. John quickly accepted, seeing many advantages in a stable, urban life.

John is very content and satisfied with his present life; the thrill of taking care of "his" birds never wears thin on him.

John enjoys assuming wereraven form and flying around on the excellent air currents that are formed over Ravens Bluff and the surrounding cliffs. The only thing that troubles John is that his secret may become public, and he will be seen as some type of unnatural monster. Consequently, John takes great care not to be seen when he changes from one form to another. Currently, only Nova, Jack Mooney, and the previous fire marshals know John is a lycanthrope.

The Charter

Jason Ringold, the Red Ravens founder, dictated this document himself; in it he describes the Red Ravens' mission. Members of the society always have cherished it, and today it is on permanent display in the hall.

Preamble: Be it henceforth resolved that under the guidelines that follow, we shall congregate under the name of The Red Ravens.

Article One: The Red Ravens' first mission shall be to save all intelligent life from the ravages of fire.
Article Two: The Red Ravens' second mission shall be to protect all private and public property from the ravages of fire.
Article Three: To accomplish Articles One and Two, our society will finance, build, and maintain a fire fighting hall. This hall shall be used for storage of equipment, have areas for training and relaxation, and have a meeting area for society business.
Article Four: For the protection of Ravens Bluff, the society will build and maintain alarm bells, rain barrels, water towers, and other devices to aid in the fighting of fires. Our society will also lobby the city government's building inspectors to create and enforce stronger building and fire laws.
Article Five: The Red Ravens' long term funding shall come from the busi-

nesses we protect.
Article Six: Membership is open to any resident of Ravens Bluff who owns a legitimate business or a home inside the city walls. People living outside the city can apply to become members. Moreover, our society shall recruit at least one member from each of the city's professional guilds. The society shall endeavor to purchase equipment and materials from each guild at or below cost.
Article Seven: Each member shall have one vote in the election of society officers.
Article Eight: The leadership of the Red Ravens is to be elected by the membership, each member casting one vote for each office position. Each term in office will be for two years, and no member shall serve in the same office for more than four consecutive terms.
Article Nine: Most members shall be line fire fighters and shall be assigned to a specific fire wagon.
Article Ten: Each fire wagon shall be under the leadership of one person. This person shall be given the title of Fire Captain.
Article Eleven: The fire captains shall be lead by a chief administrator with the title of Fire Marshal.
Article Twelve: The fire marshal is authorized to buy equipment and to hire as many employees as necessary to maintain both the Hall of Red Ravens and the society's ability to fight fires.
Article Thirteen: To change the charter requires the votes of least two thirds of the membership.
Article Fourteen: All members shall take an oath of secrecy to protect themselves, their fellows, their businesses, and their families.
Article Fifteen: The society shall maintain high standards for training and relaxation.

The charter bears 20 signatures, the first one being "Jason Ringold."

The Fire Hall

About 60 years ago, the Red Ravens constructed their fire hall, "The Hall of the Red Ravens." The building stands in the center of Ravens Bluff. It is tall and ornate, with polished black granite walls covered with relief carvings of ravens. At street level, the front of the hall has a row of five double doors, painted red. These doors are used to get the fire wagons into and out of the building. Over the doors is a sign, written in Common, saying, "The Red Ravens, membership or visitation by invitation only." Several smaller doors are used for discreet entry and exit.

The fire hall has a large courtyard which is enclosed by 10-foot-high polished black granite walls. This area is used to train and evaluate new fire fighters. There is also a stable with 30 stalls and a large store of equipment and feed. A square water tower is used for washing down the equipment, or to fight nearby fires. The society keeps the tower filled with a *decanter of endless water.* Both the stable and the water tower are built of the same polished black granite as the fire hall.

Ground Floor

A. Carriage House. Five fire wagons are stored here. One wagon is always hitched to a team of six horses for immediate use. (For more details on the fire wagons, see the equipment section.) A brass fire pole leads down from the society's lounge on the second floor.

B. Workshop. This area holds a small black smith and carpentry shop.

C. Archives. This room holds a records library containing the society's financial records and detailed lists of every member—past and present—and every fire run. There are 20 books that detail how to put out any kind of fire from small blazes to great infernos. The most worn book is titled, *Saving People and Property from Fire* by Nova Moonstar. There also is a history of Jason Ringold, the captain of a three-masted merchant ship, *The Silver Star.* While the *Star* was in port, a wildfire on the docks killed more than 190 people, including his girlfriend, Ellen Palmland. After learning what happened, Jason decided to create a society dedicated to putting out destructive fires. Ten years and a great amount of his own gold latter, Jason created the Red Ravens and built the "The Hall of Red Ravens." Just five hours after the private inauguration of the hall, the society fought its first fire. During the following years, the Red Ravens fought many fires and saved more than 200 lives. Equally important, the Red Ravens have prevented every fire they fought from going out of control and burning down neighborhoods.

D. Strong Room. This vault is protected by an iron door that has two rugged combination locks of *masterful* quality. Each lock has a −60 modifier to open locks attempts; the vault is not impervious to *knock* spells, but it takes three of them to open the door when it is closed and locked. Only Nova Moonster and the fire captains know the combinations. The vault is lined with layers of lead, brass, and magnetized cold iron which prevent scrying, teleportation, and astral or etherial projection into it.

The vault contains the society's magic items. There are 3d4 *potions of healing,* 2d4 *potions of fire resistance,* 2d4 *potions of flying,* 1d4 *potions of fire giant strength,* two wands of *flame extinguishing,* two *iridescent ioun stones,* two *wands of frost,* a *decanter of endless water,* and a *carpet of flying* (four-passenger capacity).

E. Pantry. This large cold-storage room holds all the perishable food for victory feasts held after each successfully fought fire. The room is cooled by ice from the Ice House (see issue #53).

The Second Floor

A. Kitchen. This has four iron stoves and many wooden cabinets filled with nonperishable food, spices, cooking utensils, glasses, silverware, and china.

B. The Dining Hall. There are cloth draped tables with padded chairs. The after fire feasts are eaten here.

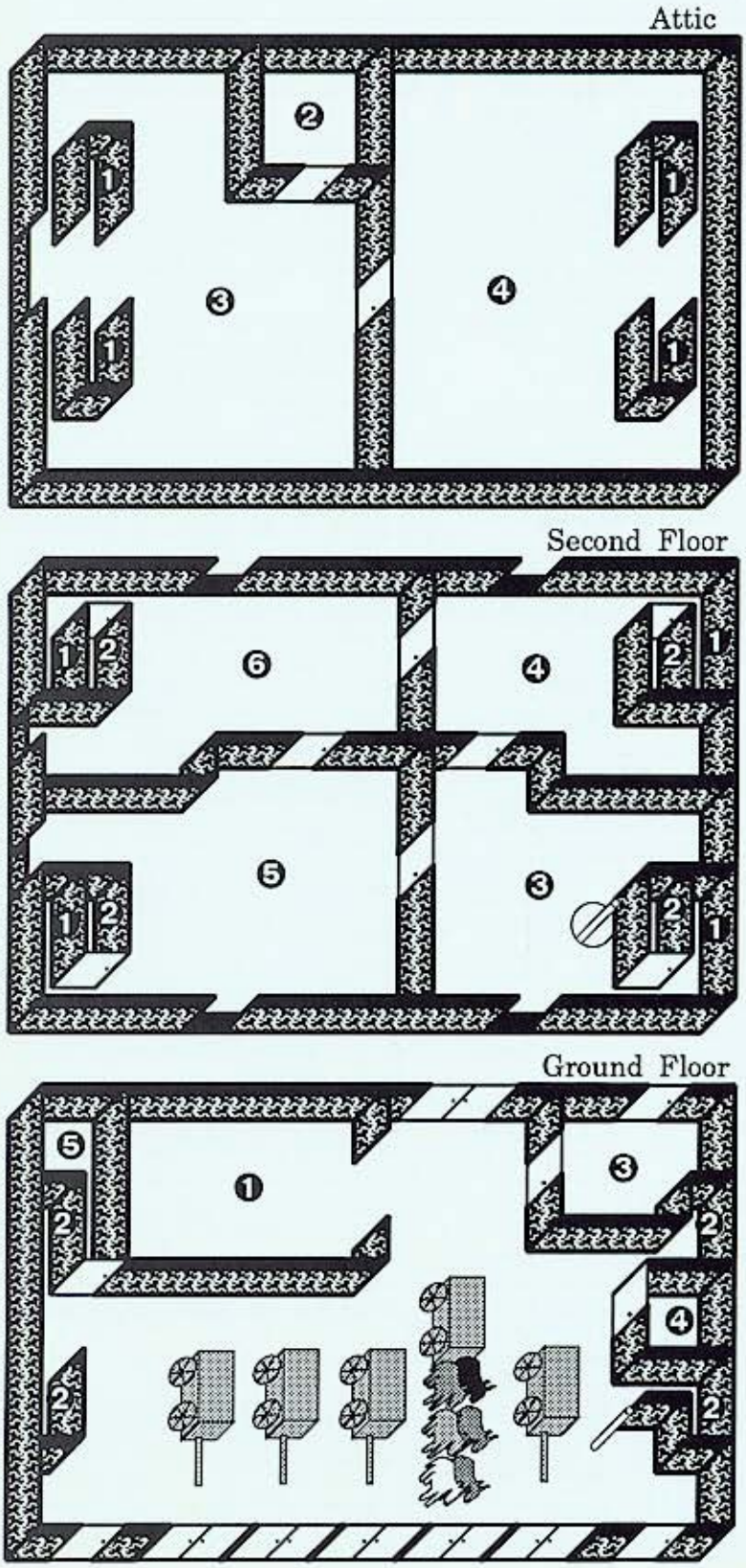
C. Lounge. This room has oriental carpets, five round tables, over stuffed chairs, and a well-stocked bar. Chandeliers full of oil lamps, all well polished, provide light. A brass fire pole leads down to the first floor, room A. The pole has a four-foot-high polished brass guard rail with a gate.

D. Meeting Hall. This is where members come to discuss society business. The members sit in rows of chairs facing a large dais. On the dais are six chairs and a table for the current society officers. Behind the chairs is a glass display case decorated elaborately with gold leaf, which holds the society's charter. The case is locked with a lock of *excellent* quality that gives a −20 penalty to open locks attempts.

Attic

Half of the attic is a storage area filled mostly with once-useful items that have become useless junk. PCs could make a little money by hauling this junk to The Ravens Bluff Sanitation Facility (see issue 52). The other half is devoted to the nests of approximately

RED RAVENS FIRE HALL



☐ Five Feet

Attic

1. Stairs Down
2. John House's Apartment
3. Ravens' Nests
4. Storage Area

Second Floor

1. Stairs Down
2. Stairs Up
3. Lounge
4. Kitchen
5. Meeting Hall
6. Dining Hall

Ground Floor

1. Blacksmith & Carpenter
2. Stairs Up
3. Records Library
4. Vault
5. Refrigerator

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100 ravens, who come and go through an opening in the wall. There is an enclosed apartment for John House/ Blackthunder.

Operations

When a destructive fire starts in Ravens Bluff, someone will sound the neighborhood alarm bell and keep it ringing until the Red Ravens arrive. Each neighborhood has a bell that gives off a different tone. Upon hearing a bell, the society's members don their uniforms at home. Then, with the alarm bells acting as a beacon, they head to the fire.

In addition, John House changes into Blackthunder and he and his birds leave the fire hall. The flock flies to the site of the fire and circles, creating a marker for the Red Ravens. At night Blackthunder flies over the fire, wearing his *continual light* necklace.

The higher ranking members bring the society's magic items from the vault. Pere Marquette rushes to the fire hall and takes a wagon directly to the fire, picking up any other members he meets or overtakes on the way.

When the Red Ravens arrive at a fire, their first priority is to save any trapped victims. They do anything they can to enter and search a burning building: Wizards will *levitate,* or *fly,* others use the *carpet of flying,* ladders, ropes, or any other available means to reach trapped people. Meanwhile, senior members not involved in rescue efforts use the society's magical items to fight the fire, while the less experienced organize bucket brigades, start up the pump wagons, and stretch hoses to any accessible supply of water.

Personal equipment for members is a suit of heat resistant fabric; this material has a +2 bonus on saves vs. fire or heat, is magically waterproof and colored red. The suits include helmets shaped like a raven's head. These completely cover the fire fighter's head and tie off at the neck; the "eyes" are glass lenses that protect the eyes. The hollow beak is stuffed with a blend of cotton cloth and other fibrous material that filters out smoke.

The fire wagons are the most impressive two-axle vehicles on the streets of the Living City today. Each one is painted bright red, has a generous amount of polished brass, and even some gold leaf trim. Each of these large fire wagons is pulled by a team of six horses. Each wagon has four *continual light* spells cast on the front and two more on the rear. These make the wagons easy to drive and to be seen by others, even on nights when the fog is so thick that it is hard to see buildings across the street.

Almost half a fire wagon's space is filled with a large, four person hand pump that can produce up to 120 PSI of pressure. However, water usually is not carried in the wagons—this would tend to make them slow and heavy. The pumps get water from anywhere the Red Ravens can find it. In a pinch, the Red Ravens use their extra wagons to carry water from the fire hall to the fire. Each wagon also carries 800 feet of sheep gut/linen hose in 50- to 80-foot sections. These hoses are tipped with copper couplings so that they may be connected to each other, or to the rain barrels and water towers to gravity feed water to the fire. Likewise, each wagon has two, 25-foot-tall hook ladders, a fire axe for each team member, a four-person battering ram, 50 feet of rope with a grapple, and 10 "slakers."

A slaker is a five-gallon leather flask which holds a breakable clay beaker filled with weak acid and three pounds of crushed shells (calcium). Ambassador Carrague created the first slaker 50 years ago, when the old man had a sharper mind (see LC1 *Gateway to Ravens Bluff*). Currently, Will Caldan of The Black Lotus (see issue #40) manufactures the slakers and sells them to the society at cost. In a fire the beaker is broken and its contents mix to produce a foamy mixture of gas (carbon dioxide) and water which gushes out of the flask through a narrow, flexible rubber tube, and onto the fire.

Wereraven

FREQUENCY:	Very Rare
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any
DIET:	Omnivore
TREASURE:	K, M, Q
INTELLIGENCE:	Average to Exceptional (9-16)
ALIGNMENT:	Any
NO. APPEARING:	1-2
ARMOR CLASS:	7
MOVEMENT:	12, Fl 18 (C)
HIT DICE:	3
THAC0:	17
NO. OF ATTACKS:	3
DAMAGE/ ATTACK:	1-3/ 1-3/1-4
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	See below
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	See below
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	M
MORALE:	Elite (13-14)
XP VALUE:	420

Wereravens, sometimes called royal ravens, are the largest and most powerful type of raven seen near the Living City. A wereraven can assume one of two forms, that of a normal human, or a humanoid raven. Usually, they remain in human form.

Combat: Like other lycanthropes, wereravens can be harmed only by silver or magical weapons. A wereraven can speak with any avian creature and can control avians with animal or lower intelligence within a 40-yard radius. The maximum number of birds a wereraven can control is equal to four times its total hit points.

Wereravens avoid melee and prefer to attack with missile weapons or by assuming their humanoid form and making swoop attacks. A wereraven attacking in this manner can use only its claws, but receives a +2 bonus "to hit."

Habitat/Society: Wereravens usually pose as normal humans. They travel and live alone, or with a single mate. Chaotic wereravens are notoriously bad parents and usually will abandon their offspring at the first opportunity, though good and neutral wereravens will arrange things so that a human or demi-human family will adopt the child. Wereravens living in or near Ravens Bluff find the humanoid raven image found on the city coat of arms, and on many business advertisements, quite amusing, and often will say so to passersby. Wereravens resent their inability to control greater ravens (see issue #44) and tend to dislike them.

Ecology: Wereravens prefer urban settings and usually sustain themselves by working a normal trade. However, they often choose a profession where their ability to fly will give them an advantage. Many wereravens are merchants or troubadours. ❑

Into The Dark

Five Voyages With Sinbad

by James Lowder

Sinbad's voyages, both the original seven and the myriad related in film and print in more recent years, provided a big part of the inspiration for the upcoming AL-QADIM™ Arabian Adventures campaign setting for the AD&D® game system. The films reviewed this month show just what sort of unusual challenges might await you in the new campaign setting. Most of them stand as great springboards for your own Arabian role playing adventures, too.

You can't get any better *****
Entertaining and enjoyable ****
There are worse films ***
Wait for cable **
A waste of good tape *

The 7th Voyage of Sinbad

1958, 87 Minutes
Columbia
Director: Nathan Jura
Cast: Kerwin Mathews, Kathryn Grant, Torin Thatcher
****

Though certainly not the first Sinbad movie, *7th Voyage* has proven quite influential with more recent films featuring the swashbuckling hero. The movie has had an impact upon fantasy films in general, as well, largely because of the stunning special effects by master showman Ray Harryhausen. Once you've seen the creatures showcased in *7th Voyage*, you'll be far more critical of the shoddy monsters inhabiting most fantasy films.

In hopes of retrieving a magic lamp from the cyclops on Colossa, the evil wizard Sokurah uses his magic to shrink Princess Parisa, beloved of Sinbad. If the renowned hero won't sail to the dangerous island, his bride-to-be will stay the size of a *Prince of Thieves* action figure and Baghdad will find itself caught up in a war with the princess's country. Being the dashing, heroic sort, Sinbad gathers a crew and sets off for Colossa.

Along the way, Sinbad must deal with mutineers, sirens, and storms at sea. And when he reaches Colossa, things really pick up! The fabled hero must contend with a frightening giant cyclops that tries to roast his first mate on a spit, a roc and its hungry two-headed chick, and an incredibly nasty fire-breathing dragon. Harryhausen's masterful stop-motion effects make all the creatures convincing and lifelike. The best showcase for Harryhausen's talents is the breathtaking sword fight between Sinbad and a skeletal servant of the evil wizard. The big monster-versus-monster slugfest toward the close of the film—cyclops against dragon this time—became a standard element of Harryhausen's work on Sinbad flicks.

Alas, the cast of *7th Voyage* is not as consistently interesting as the effects. Torin Thatcher makes Sokurah a memorable bad guy, and Kathryn Grant is charming as the coquettish Princess Parisa. As Sinbad, Kerwin Mathews does a great job in the action scenes, but simply does not cut it as a dashing, romantic lead. He isn't the worst Sinbad imaginable—Lou Ferrigno holds that honor—but he's far from inspiring.

7th Voyage boasts a score by composer Bernard Herrmann, one especially rousing during the scenes at sea. Yes, the ship used in long shots for Sinbad's vessel is much more modern than any our hero should have used (by at least one thousand years). Obviously some bright production-type at Columbia thought using stock footage from old pirate movies was an admirable way to save money. After the great monster effects, this strikes me as pretty darn ridiculous.

Captain Sinbad

1963, 85 Minutes
MGM
Director: Byron Haskins
Cast: Guy Williams, Heidi Bruhl, Pedro Armendariz
***

Guy Williams, known to most of you as Disney's Zorro or John Robinson of *Lost in Space* fame, creates a Sinbad who has everything lacking in Kerwin Mathews's portrayal—flair, a sense of humor, and a screen presence that announces him as the hero the moment the camera turns to him. Too bad the rest of the film fails to share that spark.

Returning to Baristan to wed a princess (Heidi Bruhl), Sinbad sails into a trap set by the evil El Karim (Pedro Armendariz), who wants the young woman for his own. And since El Karim keeps his heart magically locked away in a tower, there's no way to defeat him—unless the heart is destroyed.

As you might expect in a Sinbad film, the road to the tower is filled with fantastic perils—a hydra, invisible enemies, even a giant guardian fist. The ideas are all good, though the special effects never live up to the concepts and certainly look like film school failures when compared to the effects in *The 7th Voyage of Sinbad*. The same is true of the spells cast by Galgo, the annoying, simpering court magician. The script was certainly creative, but the resulting scenes are, well, downright cheesy.

Apart from Williams, the cast of *Captain Sinbad* is uniformly weak. Overacting is the flavor of the day, and the supporting cast all dish out heaping helpings. Bad acting and shaky effects can't completely smother the film's undeniable charm, however. You'll roll your eyes as often as not at this version of Sinbad's adventures, but it's worth a look.

The Golden Voyage of Sinbad

1973, 104 Minutes
Columbia
Director: Gordon Hessler
Cast: John Phillip Law, Caroline Munro, Tom Baker
****1/2

Some critics claim this sequel to *The 7th Voyage of Sinbad* stands as only a pale imitation of the original, but I think it's consistently entertaining.

To foil the machinations of the evil Black Prince Koura (Tom Baker), Sinbad uncovers the secret of a mysterious tri-part amulet; anyone who places the three pieces into the Fountain of Destiny regains his youth and is awarded a crown of untold riches and a shield of darkness. But Koura is spying on Sinbad with the help of a nasty little homunculus. The race is soon joined, with both Sinbad and the evil wizard trying to reach the fountain first.

Like *7th Voyage*, this Sinbad film boasts fantastic stop-motion effects by Ray Harryhausen. Koura's homunculus, a ship's figurehead possessed by the wizard, a one-eyed centaur, and a griffon all come to life thanks to Harryhausen's skill. The effects showpiece of *Golden Voyage* is Sinbad's duel with a six-armed statue of Kali, though the final slugfest between the centaur and the griffon is sharp, too.

Golden Voyage rises above the other Sinbad films in two areas: cast and script. John Phillip Law makes a great Sinbad, and Baker proves he can play villains as well as he played Doctor Who. Even the supporting cast is strong, with standout performances all over the place. The script, by Brian Clemens (*Captain Kronos* and the "Avengers" television series), is filled with clever uses of magic and amusing characterization. One glaring contrivance—a tattoo that saves the heroes from the savage natives of Lemuria—causes the well-paced story to wobble a bit toward the close, but not enough to topple this exciting, memorable fantasy epic.

Sinbad and the Eye of the Tiger

1977, 113 Minutes
Columbia
Director: Sam Wannamaker
Cast: Patrick Wayne, Jane Seymour, Patrick Troughton
****1/2**

The Golden Voyage of Sinbad was such a success that Columbia re-released *7th Voyage* and rushed this film into production. *Eye of the Tiger* shows that haste in almost every scene.

During the ceremony intended to invest Prince Kassim with the title of caliph, his evil stepmother turns him into a baboon. The only salvation for the young man lies in Hyperborea, in the Shrine of the Four Elements. But if he isn't taken to the shrine quickly, his half-brother will take the throne. It's up to Sinbad, who happens to be in love with the prince's sister, to save the day.

As Sinbad, Patrick Wayne (John's son) is more wooden than the figurehead animated by Tom Baker in *Golden Voyage*. Jane Seymour does her typical swooning as Princess Farah, and Taryn Power murmurs her way through her role as Dione. Only Patrick Troughton (another former Doctor Who), as the sage Melanthius, makes a go of the tedious, predictable script.

Harryhausen's effects are fun, as usual, but a bit uneven. The bronze minotaur that serves the evil stepmother is especially effective. Other neat stop-motion creations include a troglodyte, a giant smiledon, and a monstrous walrus. The integration of the stop-motion creatures with the actors is quite poor at times, though the animated baboon appears more lifelike than Patrick Wayne in most scenes.

After the great Bernard Herrmann soundtrack for *7th Voyage* and the Miklos Rosza score for *Golden Voyage*, the music in this film seems really saccharine. Luckily, Harryhausen & Co. called it quits in the Sinbad market after this disappointing film. However, that does not mean that more recent Sinbad films have been better. Far from it, as the next howler undoubtedly proves....

Sinbad of the Seven Seas

1990, 90 Minutes
Cannon
Director: Enzo Castellari
Cast: Lou Ferrigno, John Steiner
1/2

Sinbad is usually depicted as a clever hero, one who relies on brains and a quick sword to save him and his crew from fantastic perils. Who better to cast as the dashing, witty swashbuckler than the Incredible Hulk himself, Lou Ferrigno? Almost anyone, I would imagine.

Supposedly based upon an obscure Poe tale, "The Thousand and Second Tale of Scheherazade," this badly dubbed, poorly acted mess is really more of a sloppy swipe of *The Princess Bride*. A mother tells a whiny little girl a bedtime story, and this woman's pointless voice-over narration interrupts the film throughout. I don't know which is worse, the interruptions or the Sinbad story itself.

Actually, this adventure flick is so outrageously bad that it's worth watching—but only to ridicule. Sinbad talks lovingly to a bunch of rubber snakes, then makes a rope of them to escape a pit. The Arabian sailor's crew consists of, among others, a samurai warrior and a Viking. We are subjected to piranha hand puppets, ancient plexiglass torture devices, and slow-motion Viking-fu. Sinbad's dialogue includes such scintillating lines as, "You'll pay for that, you filthy rat!" Luckily, the producers had someone dub Lou's speeches for him. At least they possessed that modicum of professionalism.

Next month we have our first reader request column, though fellow columnist and eminent editor Roger Moore suggested the Harryhausen Sinbad films for review some months back. Surprisingly good taste for someone who works for *DRAGON*® Magazine, don't you think?

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GEnie And The Network

More Benefits For Members

by Scott Barr

The General Electric Network for Information Exchange (GEnie) has been the home of the TSR Roundtable for the past three years.

We've been adding benefits, and it's time to give you an update—and announce a special offer to RPGA™ Network clubs and Regional Directors.

The Roundtable

The TSR Roundtable is home to a bulletin board service with topics ranging from the original D&D® game to new product lines such as the DARK SUN™ world.

Product questions are answered directly by TSR staff members and online SYSOPs (System operators). There are also message-based role playing sessions for the AD&D® game, MARVEL SUPER HEROES game, and others—all being played right on the message boards. Of course, there are special guests, such as Alan Varney, Aaron Allston and Mike Stackpole.

The Roundtable has live online conferencing areas. These areas allow users all over the world (from Austria, Germany, Japan, Russia, Canada, the United States, and other countries) to meet and talk. This is how the Network club Electric Adventures Unlimited (EAU) meets, and this is also how role playing games can be played without leaving the comfort of your home.

TSR provides a guest speaker each month. Previous guest speakers have included Zeb Cook, Bruce Nesmith, Jean Rabe, Skip Williams, Jeff Grubb, Barbara Young, Roger Moore, and many more. Attendees of these meetings can speak directly with these TSR representatives about products, projects, and the gaming industry.

EAU and the Roundtable sponsor quarterly gaming conventions.

These conventions feature RPGA Network sanctioned tournaments, TSR guest speakers, and boatloads of TSR merchandise prizes.

Also online is a large (and growing) library of TSR articles, archives of message topics, and game recaps. These can be downloaded and printed on your computer. DRAGON® Magazine provides the TSR Roundtable with a wide variety of articles and materials, and the Roundtable staff also contributes.

The Mail Order Hobby Shop is represented. You can order games and support material directly online.

Special Offer

Now GEnie has provided the Network with a special offer. The TSR Roundtable would like to see all those Regional Directors and club presidents who own computers sign up for GEnie. For those who do, the Roundtable will be **free.** There will be no connect time charges for the TSR area. There are hopes that a national assembly of Network representatives can be built through this program, and that GEnie will be the official electronic home of the Network. Imagine a meeting where all of the Network Regional Directors could meet and discuss issues that affect members. Imagine being able to conduct these meetings weekly and forward the notes to HQ instantly.

There's More

New to GEnie is the ability to register and renew RPGA Network memberships directly online. No U.S. Mail to worry about, no check to write, no worrying if the paperwork reached its destination. It's automatic.

Also new to GEnie is the ability to register for GEN CON® Game Fair online. Sign up for events, order your collectibles, and pay your registration fees online.

There are four easy steps to sign up for GEnie:

1. Set your communications software for half duplex (local echo), at 300, 1200, or 2400 baud.

2. Dial toll free: 1-800-638-8369 (or in Canada, 1-800-387-8330). Upon connection, enter HHH

3. At the U# = prompt, type XTX 99372, RPGA then press Return.

4. Have a major credit card ready. In the U.S., you may also use your checking account number.

Your GEnie membership will qualify you for the entire spectrum of GEnie information and communications services. Here's how a membership in GEnie works:

GEnie*Basic Services: You get unlimited access to GEnie Basic Services during evenings, weekends, and holidays. These are all covered in your monthly subscription fee of just $4.95. Basic Services include unlimited electronic mail, a huge online encyclopedia, closing stock quotes, travel and shopping services, news, sports, and many bulletin boards (including Science Fiction and GEnie Multiplayer Game Support) on a variety of special interests.

GEnie Value Services: For the low hourly rate of $6 during non-prime (note $8 an hour for Canadian users) time and $18 prime-time, access GEnie's computing areas, including the biggest library of software downloads on any major service. Chat with other GEnie members worldwide. Play amazing multiplayer games. And access selected information services.

GEnie Professional Services: GEnie offers a wide array of databases for business, investment, and personal needs, priced individually. Find detailed company reports and full-text news from hundreds of publications on Dow Jones News/Retrieval. Buy and sell stocks through Charles Schwab. Check travel information through the Official Airline Guides. And use special GEnie features, like GE Mail-to-Fax.

The TSR Roundtable is included as a GEnie Value Service along with other astounding multiplayer games available. Others include the award-winning Air Warrior, Gemstone III, Federation II, RSCARDS games (poker, blackjack, chess, checkers, reversi and backgammon).

Once you've signed up online, send electronic mail to BOLAN (Scott Barr) or DERYNI (Alan Grimes) to get acquainted with the TSR Roundtable. The Roundtable is located on GEnie page 125.

GEnie has been provided with a list of Regional Directors and club presidents. Those individuals on this list can take advantage of GEnie's free offer—just enter the roundtable and your time there is free.

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With Great Power

Continued from page 19

• Covert agencies, like SHIELD or the CIA, would love to have agents who can read minds, turn invisible, fly over enemy installations and take photographs, etc.

• Many "law and order" heroes like Captain America might become full-time members of the FBI or DEA, to better combat organized crime, especially drug smuggling.

• Many combat-oriented heroes who lack powers that operate on a large scale) could end up enlisted or drafted into their country's armed forces. This could lead to heroes doing battle with conventional armed forces. After all, modern-day soldiers are the closest thing to real super heroes that exist in our world. What other individuals have the speed, mobility, and firepower of an F-16 pilot, for example? See DRAGON® Magazine issues #105 and #144 for articles detailing American and Soviet armed forces.

• Heroes could serve as elite commandos, often operating against "enemy" heroes. Supervillains might not be necessary when there are plenty of national teams of heroes to "go to war" with.

For more on an espionage-oriented campaign, see *With Great Power* in POLYHEDRON® Newszine #65.

Real-World Campaigns

There are two ways to add real-world heroics to your super campaign. The easiest way is to simply throw in one or two real-world heroic activities (make up your own or use ideas from the list above) after your next supervillain epic ends. Use the news for ideas. Your players will probably appreciate the change of pace.

A possibly more interesting option is to, at least temporarily, send your heroes dimension-hopping to our world. Any dimension-transference device, trap, or dimensional-powered villain could arrange to plop the heroes down *here*. Where would they go? Who would they work for? Who would be out to get them? The answers to these questions only you can answer, since only you know your campaign. Have fun!

This column is dedicated to our own world's heroes—police officers, firefighters, members of the military, and everyone else who has ever laid his or her life on the line to save or protect the lives of others. These folks don't have super-strength, they aren't immune to bullets, and they can't fly.

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The Living Galaxy

Continued from page 22

Sprawl Sites, a supplement for the *Shadowrun* game, FASA Corporation. Nice stuff! Go immediately to the "Location Archetypes" section (pages 7-47) for dozens of great building layouts, shop illustrations, and basic information on inner-city design for any high-tech campaign. This material has been long overdue. Next, turn to the "Sprawl Encounters" section (pages 48-93) for loads of NPC meetings, special events, and other "happenings" in your high-tech city. Two other sections cover urban laws and money systems. (Remember the earlier notes on Archetypes and Contacts, too.) Whatever campaign you're running, you've got to have this book if you have cities.

Startown Liberty, a supplement for the *Traveller* game, by Gamelords, Ltd. I got this booklet many years ago, and I still recommend it for developing urban encounters. It was designed for creating "startowns," urban areas adjacent to ground-based starports "devoted almost entirely to satisfying the baser urges of starship crewmembers" (*The Journal of the Travellers' Aid Society* issue 7, page 11). This 48-page booklet details all sorts of adventure-generating NPC encounters, and it is well worth digging up in hobby-shop bins (it is out of print). The *Journal* reference cited earlier was taken from "Champa Interstellar Starport," an article developing a particular ground-based starport that could easily be attached to any urban area. Another article in this (also out-of-print) issue is "R&R," which details the restful and relaxing places starship crewmembers might wish to visit in urban areas—and some of the dangers of those "restful" spots. If you can get copies of either of these sources, you'll not regret it.

Companion Jorune: Ardoth, a supplement for the *Skyrealms of Jorune* game, by Skyrealms Publishing, Inc. Want to design a really peculiar city with strong trappings of nontraditional fantasy? Take a look at this booklet, which details the city of Ardoth, on the planet Jorune. Human colonists settled Jorune but warred with the local inhabitants; about 2,000 years later, many bizarre alien species coexist on Jorune in a low-tech setting. This setting takes time to get used to. The language is unfamiliar, the aliens are *very* alien, and the quasi-magical geophysics (such as the Warp Flash of 3475) might not fit your own campaign's science. Unless you play the *Skyrealms of Jorune* game, you'll find this book to be of limited use, but you might pick out some city-building ideas here anyway for peculiar low-tech cultures. The illustrations are thought-provoking and remind me of those detailing the degenerate high-tech culture on Logan's World in the *Warhammer 40,000: Rogue Trader* rules (pages 224-228).

For other ideas on low-tech city design, go to the city plans given in some of the fantasy supplements and borrow away (cutting out references to magic and the like as best you can, or converting them to psionic systems in use in your campaign). A good starting point for finding out what fantasy-city resources are available would be the "Role-playing Reviews" column in DRAGON® Magazine, issues #136 and #156; numerous city supplements are reviewed and detailed there.

Last Thoughts

I've undoubtedly missed other sources of "stealable" gaming ideas for character role playing and urban development. If you can think of a few, send them in; the best ideas will be published in this column (with you given the credit for finding them). Send your ideas to: "The Living Galaxy," c/o POLYHEDRON® Newszine, P.O. Box 515, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A.

A future column will also detail the material treasures, high-tech and low-tech, that can be found in various non-TSR rules and game supplements, as was done in this column in issues #66 and #67. The supply of aliens offered by science fiction games is equally vast and might be covered later, too.

No rules cover *everything.* Keep your eyes and mind open for new surprises for your gaming group, and you'll rank among the best GMs of all.

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AND COMPANY
by Gary M. Williams © 1991

SINCE THE UNIVERSE WAS YOUNG! A MERE SPECK IN THE GRAND UNCEASING COSMOS! WHEN THE OLDEST, BRIGHTEST STARS WERE BUT TINY GLIMMERS...

BUT FEAR NOT MY GOOD LAD! THE UNIVERSE IS A WONDERFUL PLACE TO EXPLORE!!
YEAH, BUT AIN'T IT DANGEROUS?
OH TUSH! NOT THAT I'VE ENCOUNTERED..